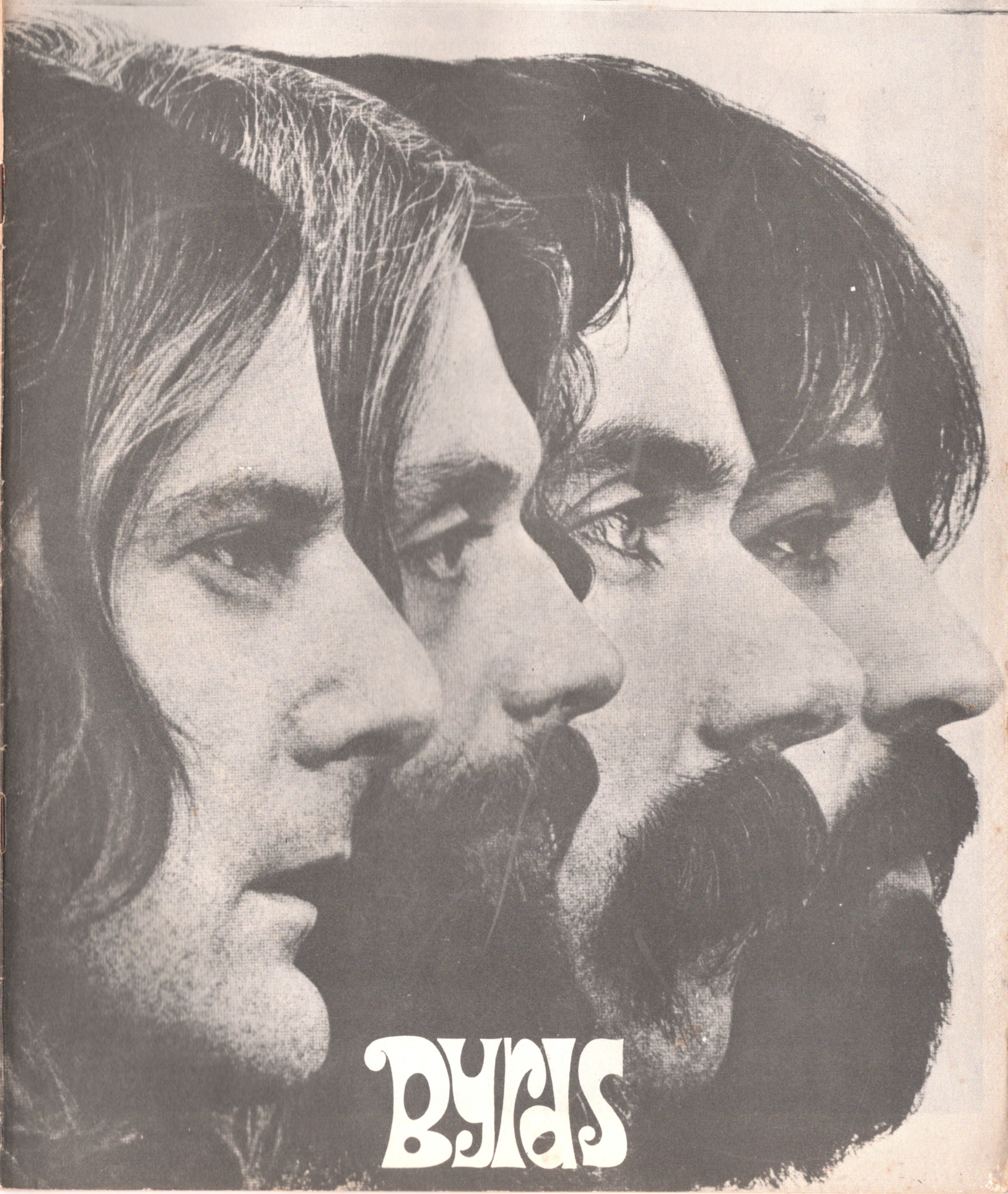


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Byrds



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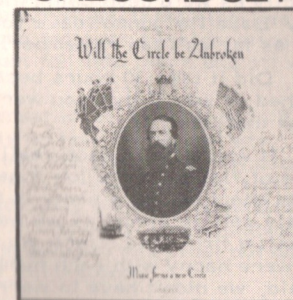
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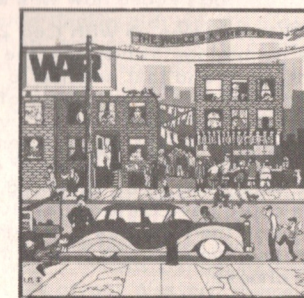
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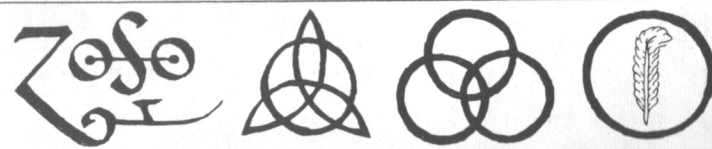


WAR
**'The World is a
Ghetto'**
(UAS 29400).



**B.J. COLE 'The
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JIMMY PAGE TALKS ABOUT LED ZEPP ZEPPELIN



ZZ: We established in the last issue how the Yardbirds evolved into Led Zeppelin; I wonder if you could explain how you "auditioned" Robert Plant (who had been suggested as a possible singer).

JP: I went up to see him sing; he was in a group called Obbstweedle or Hobbstweedle, something like that, who were playing at a teachers training college outside of Birmingham - to an audience of about twelve people... you know, a typical student set up, where drinking is the prime consideration and the group is only of secondary importance. He was alright though, singing really well, though it was stuff that I didn't like all that much. Everybody will probably crucify me for this, but he was a Moby Grape fanatic and they were doing all those kind of numbers - semi-obscure west coast stuff, which, as I say, I was never really keen on because I'd seen all these groups when I was touring with the Yardbirds and, being a guitar player, I was primarily interested in other guitarists - and some grabbed me while others didn't. Mind you, I thought some of those San Francisco bands were excellent - but I'd better talk about that later or else we'll get too side-tracked. Anyway, Robert was fantastic and having heard him that night, and having listened to a demo he had given me (of songs he'd recorded with his previous group, Band of Joy), I realised that without a doubt his voice had an exceptional and very distinctive quality.

ZZ: It was an amazingly fortunate choice as it turned out, wasn't it? To find a singer of his class stumbling around the Midlands playing to pitifully small crowds.

JP: What amazed me more than anything else, especially after the first LP was finished, was that nothing significant had happened to him before, despite his having been through so many different systems of management and so many groups. You'd have thought he'd have been noticed at least, especially when they tried to exploit

the Birmingham group scene as the successor to the Liverpool thing, but no. Our first meeting, under those conditions, was obviously a bit odd, but I asked him if he wanted to come down and spend a few days talking things over, listening to records, discussing sounds and ideas and what not, and to see what he thought. So that's what happened and it worked out very well.

ZZ: By that time the musical policy of the group had been determined, presumably, and to begin with, he adapted to that?

JP: Yes, he suppressed his personal tastes to a degree, I suppose, but he liked the stuff we were doing just as much. I don't really know how fanatical he was about the West Coast groups - you'd have to ask him - but I do know he was very keen on Moby Grape and even more so on the Buffalo Springfield.

ZZ: Right... we found out last time how John Paul Jones and John Bonham came to join... all you needed now was a name.

JP: Keith Moon came up with Led Zeppelin sometime during our Yardbirds/the New Yardbirds spell and that seemed to fit the bill; we'd been through all sorts of names, like Mad Dogs, for instance, but eventually it came down to the fact that the name was not really as important as whether or not the music was going to be accepted... I mean, we could have called ourselves the Vegetables or the Potatoes - though at the same time, you have to live with the name you choose.

ZZ: When the group signed to Atlantic, did you have to buy your way out of your old Yardbirds contract with Epic?

JP: No - because I'd never signed any contracts with them... they didn't want me at the time. Mind you, as soon as the deal with Atlantic was announced, they started saying things like "Hey, you can't record him, he's signed to us!", but when we asked them to prove it, all they came

up with was red faces and shuffling embarrassment.

ZZ: Let's get on to the albums. The first one (recorded October 68, released Feb 69) was allegedly recorded in 30 hours - can that be true and, if so, how?

JP: Yes, it only took 30 recording hours, because we knew exactly what we were going to do before we went into the studio.

ZZ: But you'd only been together as a unit for about two months - if that!

JP: That's right, we'd been together for 3 weeks, or maybe 5, but we'd done a tour of Scandinavia and we'd rehearsed all the numbers before embarking on that, and they were already starting to stretch on stage, which was a sign that we were beginning to feel comfortable with certain songs. I suppose it was the fact that we were confident and prepared which made things flow smoothly in the studio - and, as it happened, we recorded them almost exactly as we'd been doing them live... only 'Babe I'm gonna leave you' was altered, as far as I can remember.

ZZ: Did it take 30 hours because you were rushed or was it that you were satisfied after that time?

JP: It was a bit of each really; partly a case of "let's get the job done and not mess about having a party in there" and partly getting things as we wanted... it wasn't a first take effort; we went on until we were happy with each number, but, like I said, we didn't have to worry about working on arrangements because we knew the stuff already... and it came out very easily.

ZZ: Compared with your previous album ('Little Games' by the Yardbirds), which was skimped and tatty to say the least, Led Zeppelin 1 was immeasurably better in every respect, particularly the depth of sound and production. You produced that having had only limited experience -

was it a question of observation of other producers over a long period of time?

JP: Well, I'd done the Mayall single (see last issue) when I was a staff producer for Immediate, and that had given me a limited technical knowledge, but on that first Zeppelin album we had Glyn Johns as engineer and he did a great job on the sound, which is the most important aspect of production really. The most annoying thing that can happen is going into the studio, playing well and sounding great, and then going into the control room to listen to the play-back, only to find that the recorded sound is flat and bears no relation to what was happening in the studio. Now Glyn Johns is, and always has been, an ace engineer; things like sound don't hang him up because he's both confident and competent - and so we were able to tie things up fairly quickly.

ZZ: I don't really want to go exploring all the songs because we'd be here all day, but as a matter of interest, where did you dig up 'Babe I'm gonna leave you' (which must've been a different source from where Quicksilver picked it up)?

JP: I got it from the Joan Baez version, and I used to do it in the days of sitting in the darkness, playing my six string behind Marianne Faithfull. I was told that it's a traditional song - I hope it is.

ZZ: One last dumb question before we move on to the second album... why is 'How many more times', which includes 'The Hunter' and all sorts of other bits and pieces, credited as being 3½ minutes long when in fact it's over 8 minutes?

JP: I don't know - maybe it's a misprint.

ZZ: One more last question. At a time when other groups were introducing and exploring varied themes, all the songs on that album (except 'Black Mountain Side') were sexual... was that a deliberate policy? Like Robert attracts the chicks with his personality and the lyrics, and the blokes are attracted by your guitar virtuosity.

JP: You're making it sound as though the group was programmed into a certain format. It wasn't, of course. I mean, ever since the guitar became a vogue instrument, the male part of the audience has tended to be fascinated by and involved with the guitarist in the band - like the chicks used to go mad over Ricky Nelson, but the blokes were watching James Burton. When you're forming a band, you don't sit back and think how certain aspects can be exploited.

ZZ: Yes - that was an insulting question really, because some groups do, in fact, do exactly that. Sorry about that.

JP: No - apart from anything else, we didn't have time for such considerations... things just fell into place and off we went.

Our conversation on Led Zeppelin II centred mainly on how influences are assimilated over the years and how bits and pieces of music you've heard and liked, subconsciously get adapted and re-emerge - and it was very long and complicated, so I'm going to miss that out and skip on to the third album.

ZZ: Whereas the second album was recorded in fits and starts over a long period of touring, you went to a secluded part of Wales to prepare for the third... is that right?

JP: Sort of. We'd been working solidly right from the inception of the group, and we thought it was time to have a holiday, or at least some time off the road - so Robert suggested going to this cottage



Late 68 Led Zeppelin
Jimmy Page
Robert Plant John Bonham
John Paul Jones

that he'd been to with his folks when he was much younger... he was going on about what a beautiful place it was and I was pretty keen to go too, because I'd never spent any time in Wales and I wanted to. So off we went. We took our guitars along, of course, but it wasn't a question of "let's go and knock off a few songs in the country", it was "let's go and have a good time". A couple of our roadies came along too, and we spent the evenings around log fires, with pokers being plunged into cider and that sort of thing, and as the nights wore on, the guitars came out and numbers were written. So, though it wasn't planned as a working holiday, some songs did come out of it and were subsequently recorded on the third album.

ZZ: There's some great stuff on that... I think 'Tangerine' is my favourite.

JP: Well, funny enough, that wasn't written at Bron-Y-Aur... I wrote that years earlier, after an old emotional upheaval, and I just changed a few of the lyrics. I first tried recording that when I was in the Yardbirds.

ZZ: Is there a wealth of unreleased stuff by the Yardbirds then?

JP: Not a wealth, but there is some... I don't know where. 'Tangerine' was never actually finished - we just did the backing track for that - but we recorded 'My baby', which Janis Joplin did; we did a good version of that, and we did quite a few riffy rock things which sounded alright. There is another track, 'Spanish Blood', which was Jim McCartney doing his Roger Moore impersonation - like a story told over a Spanish guitar backing... that was really good actually - like one of those old story singles that used to get into the charts a few years back (like 'Ringo' by Lorne Greene and 'Big Bad John' by Jimmy Dean) but this was a romantic thing rather than the usual shoot-out Western theme. Most of these tracks were cut in the CBS studio in New York, but it was very near to the end of the group and they were never really completed.

ZZ: Getting back to Zeppelin 3, where did you unearth that traditional song - 'Gallows Pole'? (Which used to be a folk club standard around 1965, with everyone from Bert Jansch to Spider John Koerner doing it).

JP: That was on an old Folkways LP by Fred Gerlach, a twelve string player, who I think was the first white man to pick up on the instrument, having been influenced by Leadbelly. There are certainly heavy Leadbelly overtones on the record, and, as far as I know, the album wasn't well received and Gerlach got despondent and retired to Venice in California, where he kept out of the public eye. He must have kept playing though because he's just recorded a new LP on Takoma, which is very good. Anyway, I used his version as a basis, but the arrangement we use is totally different of course.

ZZ: There's an inscription on the inner circle of the pressing... it says "Do what thou wilt"; was that a message from you to your critics or a comment by the guy who made the master pressing?

JP: That sprang from me. I suppose you could say that it was instructed, but under a strict cloak of secrecy. The story behind it is too long to go into, but it was intended as an esoteric little touch... hoped that nobody would see it - and nobody did except you, which just goes to show how unobservant most people are and how observant you are. One other person, to my knowledge, saw it because Robert came up to me one day and said that someone had written to Atlantic about a strange inscription on the record... you see, I was the only one in the group who knew about it. (There's another on side 2... have a look).

ZZ: Swiftly leaping onto the fourth (and, at this writing, the most recent, even though it came out in Nov 71), I think that album is important in a number of ways - principally for Robert Plant's writing, which seems to hit a peak.

JP: I think his first important lyric is on the second LP... you see, I never felt at all confident about my lyrics and I was hoping he could do all that side of the writing, which is what's happening now. 'Thank You' is the song I'm thinking about... I think that was the starting point from which his writing of things like 'Stairway to Heaven' developed; that and the chorus of 'What is and what should never be', which was the start of a serious lyric writer coming out.

ZZ: Is 'Rock n' Roll' as spontaneous as it sounds?

JP: Yes. Bonzo played that drum thing, just messing around while we were working on another song, and I joined in on a riff, and though it only lasted about quarter of a minute, we listened to the playback and heard the basis of a whole song, which we then got together... it took about 15 minutes. Things like that often happen - in fact, there are two or three spontaneously written things on the next album... usually they're only riff numbers, but they're still loaded up with initial excitement and communication.

ZZ: Yet other songs are obviously developed in a very painstaking way - like 'Stairway to Heaven', say. How was that written? Lyrics first I would imagine from the metre.

ZZ: It was just the opposite - the music came first. I'd written it over a long period; the intro fell into place in Bron-Y-Aur, in the cottage, and other parts came together piece by piece. When we came to record it, at Headley Grange, we were so inspired by how the song could come out, with the building passages and all the possibilities, that Robert came out with the lyrics just like that... I'd say that he produced 40% of the lyrics almost immediately. We all threw in ideas, like Bonzo not coming in until the song was

under way – to create a change of gear, so to speak – and the song and arrangement just came together. . . . there was no uphill struggle on that one at all.

ZZ: How did that no name/no title sleeve come about?

JP: Well, the third LP got a real hammering from the press and I got really brought down by it because I thought it was good – I thought that 'Friends' really had something, and that track by track it was a good LP. But the press didn't like it, and they were also going on about the enigma that had blown up around us. Now, we might have made it relatively quickly, but I don't think we ever over-played our hand in the press or anything, and yet we really got knocked and we became very dispirited. As a result, we left off for almost a year and when we came to make another album we felt not only that it would make or break us, but that we had to prove something to ourselves. So we purposely underplayed the group and gave no information whatsoever – which most people thought was certain professional suicide – but the LP came out and sold very well. 'Stairway to Heaven' certainly hit a lot of people where they hadn't expected it and lots of reviews said things like 'I haven't liked them up to now, but I'd like to revise my opinion' – that sort of thing.

ZZ: Yes, but from your own experience you must realise that most 'rock critics' haven't got a clue what they're talking about.

JP: Well, I begin to wonder. On our last American tour, this guy came up and got talking to me; he said he was from Rock, which is quite an eminent, respected magazine in the States, isn't it? He asked me things like "Does Plant still gyrate about on stage?" and I said "well, if it's a fast number, he does move about, yes, but it depends what we're playing" – and this conversation went on at that sort of level until, bit by bit from the sort of questions he was asking, it became evident that he didn't really know what he was on about. So I asked him exactly when he'd last seen the band; "quite a while ago now" he mumbled, and when I questioned him a bit more it transpired that the only time he'd seen us was in 'Supershow', which was a film made a couple of months after we'd formed. It featured people like Roland Kirk and Steve Stills and Buddy Miles, and we were well down the list of artists, doing just two numbers at a time, I recall, when Robert had laryngitis – so it hardly did us justice – and that was all this bloke had seen! So here was a respected critic, who had done reviews of our albums, and he didn't know the first thing about us. . . . didn't even know that we played acoustic numbers on stage.

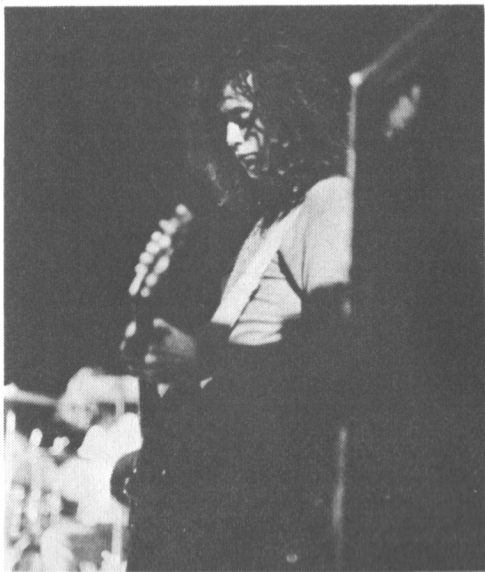
I'd been nice to him all the way along, but at that point I really let him have it.

ZZ: You punched the creep's teeth down his throat?

JP: No, I just told him that I thought it was a cheek for him to do reviews of the band if he was basing his misconceptions on that film clip. But that's the sort of thing we used to get. . . . the public was always 100% behind us, but we had few allies in the press.

ZZ: So many big rock stars seem extremely vulnerable to press opinion and yet most critics have lamentably little knowledge of their subject – but I've seen Hendrix's death, the break up of Cream and all sorts of things attributed directly to the printed word.

JP: Yes, but the thing is, these reviewers are so authoritative. We know they might be twits, but the readers may well



believe them because of the eloquent, authoritative way they write. It's so easy to criticise someone's music, but when you think how much thought and care and time it's taken, why not look for the good points at least. . . . I mean, if it's not your taste in music, then leave it well alone and let someone else do the reviews. For instance, when you ask me my opinion of certain groups, I'll tell you, but I don't want anybody to be influenced or jaded by what I say, because someone else may hold the exactly opposite view which is obviously just as valid.

ZZ: To stay on the vulnerability/frailty of the rock star theme, it seems to me that you are unusually stable in your profession, as if you discovered how to side step the pressures. . . . you've quit the ostentatious guitarist-in-the-public-eye thing and retreated to prolong active life, as it were.

JP: Well, I've been through all that and I have at times felt and been completely shattered by it all. It's not so much a question of retreating or hiding away, as being able to come over the top of it, which is not an easy thing to do. I suppose there's a moment of realisation when the whole thing falls into perspective and you see everything as it really is. I got really despondent and shattered by all the bad press – not because we couldn't take criticism, because we can – but the prolonged, deliberate snide press comments wore me down until I was becoming very unnerved, especially when I knew I was doing the best I could.

ZZ: So, is press the only real pressure?

JP: Oh no. You can develop a tremendous insecurity if your management isn't totally reliable. I know that money is a dirty word in this business, but the fact remains that if you have any measure of record success, you're going to have royalties coming in. Now, I'm sure you know of groups who have been working for years and years and end up with nothing because they've been screwed all the way down the line. . . . I mean, that sort of thing is heartbreaking. We're very lucky in that respect because we've got Peter Grant who is like a fifth member of the group; he comes on every single gig we do, which is something very few managers would ever consider doing.

ZZ: What about this constant living out of a suitcase. . . . surely that can grind you down after a while? For instance, what about that Yardbirds tour you did – which was something like two gigs a night for a month?

JP: Right. At the time it didn't seem as bad as it actually was, because being in a group you expected that sort of thing, but I couldn't do that sort of thing now. It was on the "Dick Clark Caravan of Stars", and it consisted of living in a bus for a month, travelling from town to town, gig to gig. It got to the point where there were so many people on the bus that you couldn't use the toilet; you either had to wait till you got to the gig or else hope that the bus would stop at some convenient place along the way. We were sharing this bus with Sam the Sham and the Pharaohs, Gary Lewis and the Playboys, and all sorts of people and it was so crowded that we often had to sleep on the luggage rack, depending on whether or not Gary Lewis and his crew travelled by plane, as they sometimes did.

We'd get to the gig and pile out, and Brian Hyland, who opened the show, more or less went straight out of the bus onto the stage. . . . there was no time to change or wash or anything like that. And, if it was a double gig – playing two halls in the same city, the bus would do a sort of shuttle service. . . . like we'd come off stage, get on the bus which had just returned from taking Brian Hyland and whizz off to the other gig. It's just ludicrous to remember how bad it was.

ZZ: So you don't get exploited like that any more?

JP: I think, when you boil it down, the real pressure comes when you're doing the best you can and people are just writing it off as crap. That really affected me at one point and I know of other people who've probably been affected to a greater extent, but I came to the conclusion that it doesn't pay to be too sensitive.

ZZ: To change the subject completely, whose records do you listen to when you're just lying around at home?

JP: I like Fairport Convention; I just got that double album, even though I had most of the tracks already. . . . that's a group I've always liked – especially 'Liege and Lief', which for me was the best LP of 1969. I love those songs with stories, you see, and that LP is full of them. . . . and that's one of the reasons I like 'Jack Orion' by Bert Jansch – I still listen to his albums all the time. I'm very fond of the early Sun records (true enough; he'd just invested in a pile of Sun singles that very morning).

I don't know, I listen to all sorts of things – like those BBC radio archives programmes that they sometimes have; I always try to listen to those because they invariably have something of interest. They recently had a man who'd travelled through India with a tape recorder, and he'd recorded a bagpipe band, which was fascinating. . . . that kind of unschooled folk music always interests me. But I can listen to something like that and then put on a Warren Smith record straight afterwards.

ZZ: On the basis that it's just your opinion and is not intended to sway anybody, can I ask you about certain bands. . . . like you mentioned the Springfield in connection with Robert's pre-Zep manias – don't you like their stuff?

JP: I must admit that their music was very good, but I saw them a number of times and they always struck me as being the perfectly balanced/rehearsed group – sort of like the Hollies, where whenever you saw them the harmonies and balance and performance would always be perfect. They were like that; very cut and dried, and samey every night.

ZZ: Like Gene Pitney – putting exactly

the same emotion and energy and movement into his performance whether it was Carnegie Hall or the Saturday morning pictures.

JP: I suppose so – but the Springfield were obviously very good, even though they didn't strike me on an emotional level. . . . like Split did, for instance. I saw Spirit a couple of times and thought they were very good. . . . and Kaleidoscope; they're my favourite band of all time – my ideal band – absolutely brilliant. I saw them one time and they played all the numbers off 'Beacon from Mars', all that Moroccan stuff, changing instruments and having a whale of a time they were. They had such good roots and such a grip on their music – and that bloke Sol (Soloman Feldthouse) was a real traveller. . . . the sort of bloke you'd meet on the road out in the East somewhere, and you knew there was no phoniness in him, because it showed in his music. One night I saw them playing the Avalon Ballroom, and he was doing a flamenco thing, which was so authentic – easily as good as you'd expect from a top concert guitarist. . . . and then this line of Flamenco dancers suddenly emerged from the wings and danced across the stage. . . . just too much! It sounds a bit corny, just explaining it to you like this, but it certainly wasn't because the spirit and enthusiasm was so great.

ZZ: And their best albums were never released here! Which other American bands impressed you on stage?

JP: I thought NRBQ were good. They had a nice light-hearted attitude, but the music underneath was very solid too. . . . they had a countryish guitarist who was very tasty indeed, but he did a religious thing and left the group.



ZZ: And their albums didn't sell at all. . . . Woolworths' deletion racks are full of them. One final reversion to that 4th album before we go: I don't think anybody ever managed to discover the relevance of those symbols that comprise the title. Do you want to tell us about those. . . . those Icelandic runes, or whatever they were?

JP: They're not Icelandic – that was just a red-herring type rumour -- and only the middle two (see the heading of this interview) are actually runes. What happened was that we all chose a symbol and the 4 together became the title of the

record. Robert's is his own design; the feather – a symbol on which all sorts of philosophies have been based and which has a very interesting heritage. . . . like, for instance, it represented courage to the Red Indian tribes. John Paul Jones' symbol, the second from the left, came from a book about runes, and was said to represent a person who was both confident and competent because it was difficult to draw it accurately. . . . and John Bonham's came from the same book – he just picked that one out (the 3 circles). My symbol was one which I designed myself, but a lot of people mistook it for a word 'Zoso', and some people in the States still refer to the record as 'Zoso', which is a pity because it wasn't supposed to be a word at all but something entirely different. . . . and with a different meaning altogether.

Basically, the whole title thing was just another ruse to throw the media into chaos and we all had a good laugh when the record went into the charts and they had to reproduce the symbols instead of a conventional title. Atlantic supplied all the papers with the appropriate sized block, but they didn't like it at all, because it set a precedent. . . . so that album set two precedents; firstly the title, and secondly, the sleeve bore no wording at all – not even the number or the name of the printer.

And at that juncture, we called a halt, though the above conversation is vastly edited. In fact, there is so much grist left on the tape, that we'll extend this into a 3 part article, concluding in the next issue, when the following topics will be discussed: working on the soundtrack to Kenneth Anger's 'Lucifer Rising', the amazing Police tear-gas attack in Milan, the tactics of predatory groupies, Jimmy Page meets Breathless Dan, etc. Pete



The above half page was reserved for an advertisement for Time Out magazine, but 36 hours after copy date, they told us they'd be unable to get the artwork together for this issue! (Gee, thanks for letting us know so quickly fellers. . . . what sort of efficiency are you operating at down there, Connor me old mate?) Anyway, with the printers screaming for the rest of the art work, and us lying on the floor suffering from exhaustion, all we could come up with to fill the space was a pretty picture. Gor blimey!

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RICHARD HARRIS

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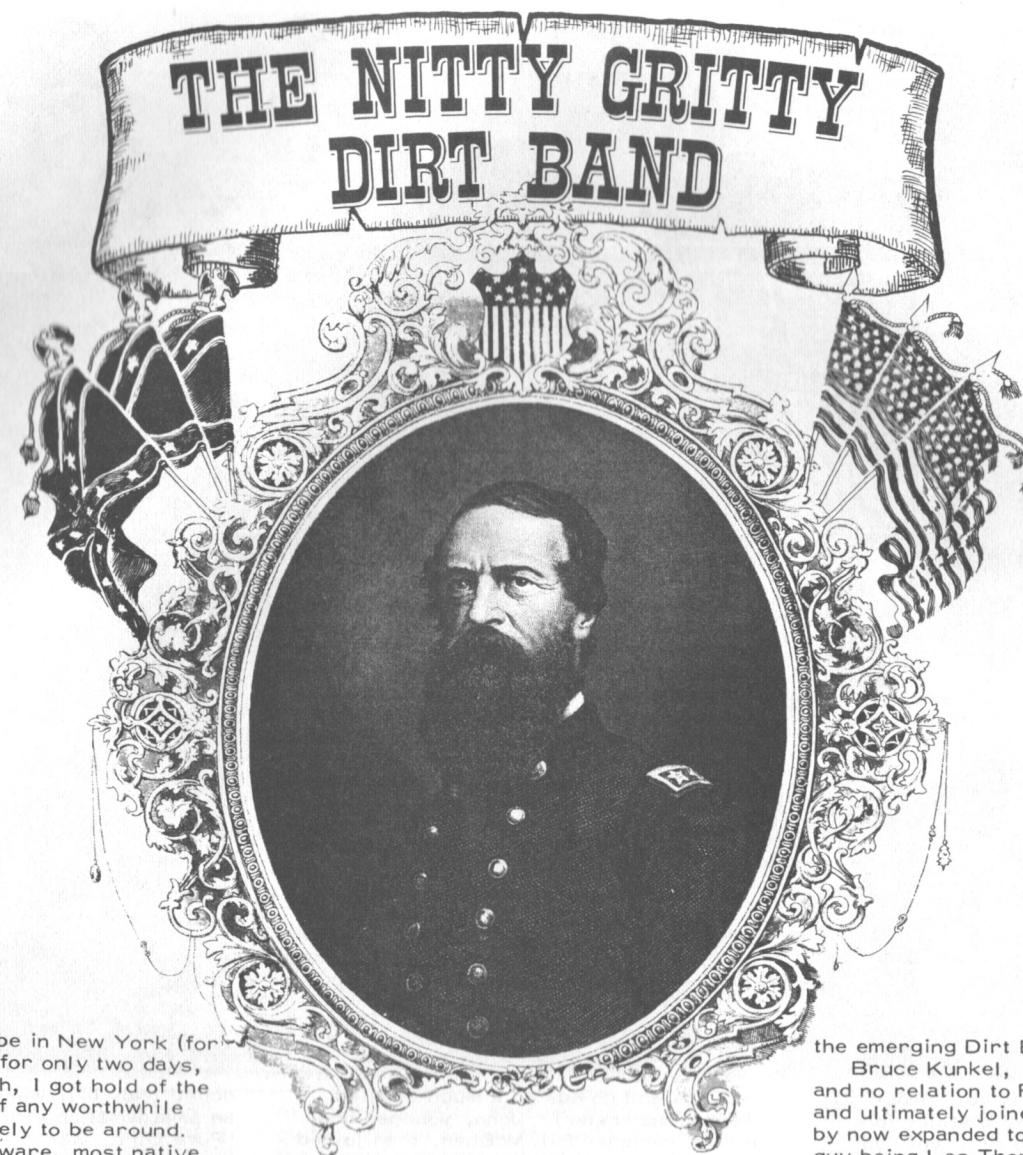
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Knowing that I would be in New York (for the Genesis bonanza) for only two days, December 13th and 14th, I got hold of the Village Voice to see if any worthwhile interviewees were likely to be around. As you are no doubt aware, most native New York musicians have, over the last ten years or so, flown for sunnier and healthier parts, seemingly leaving only a core of folkies to prolong the Greenwich Village myth, plus a few masochists who actually enjoy living in that neatly squared up jungle. However, a glance at the Voice's entertainments section revealed that the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band would arrive to coincide with our visit - and these were the only visitors of real interest in this pre-Christmas lull, apart from John Hartford, who I tried to get hold of, but couldn't find the necessary route. All other acts playing New York were feeble British imports of the Uriah Heep calibre. A bleak musical scene.

A visit to the United Artists press office, populated by one Marv Griefinger (there's an American name for ya!) and his charming assistant Susan Blond (an intriguing Bowie style lady who seemed pre-occupied with phoning her doctor with enquiries of a distinct Evelyn Home nature), secured an interview which, the next morning, was held in the coffee room of the City Squire, a Seventh Avenue hotel favoured by the more flamboyant American rock groups, while the Dirties devoured breakfasts of waffles, eggs over, crunchy super-vitaminised protein-rich wheat flakes and stuff like that. They were in town to play four nights at Max's Kansas City and to do a spot of radio publicity to promote their new triple album.

Not much has been documented about the listless career of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, so I determined to go for the whole history rather than dwell, as I suspect

they would have preferred, on the new album, which, after all, may never reach the local record shops of England

The original band formed as a result of several fun-only performing stabs by a bunch of jug bandy music freaks who lived and went to school in Orange County, which is bounded by Los Angeles County in the north and the surf of the Pacific on the West. There were two main points of folkie congregation, the Paradox Club and McCabe's guitar store, over the county line in Long Beach LA. According to uncorroborated evidence, Jeff Hanna, as the local 'San Francisco Bay Blues' exponent, was employed by McCabe's to give guitar lessons and it was in the store one day that a jam developed between Jimmie Fadden (who had sauntered in to purchase a Db harmonica), Hanna, and one Ralph Barr, another guitar picker of local repute. Such was their enthusiasm as they steamed through 'Stealin' and other standards, they decided to continue later at the house of William McEuen, who encouraged them and, donning an entrepreneurial mantle as their prospective manager/producer/adviser, booked them into the aforementioned Paradox for their first serious professional engagement. This club was the outlet for all local creativity in those folkie days of 65/66 and saw pre-fame appearances by Tim Buckley, Pamela Poland, Hoyt Axton, Steve Noonan, Greg Copeland, Jim Fielder, Jose Feliciano even, and Jackson Browne, who joined

the emerging Dirt Band.

Bruce Kunkel, a celebrated surfer and no relation to Russ, arrived to sit in and ultimately joined the group which had by now expanded to a sextet (the other guy being Les Thompson) with ambitions of grasping a national reputation, though they'd hardly played one gig. We're up to late 1966, by the way.

Pause for digression: short discourse on folk-rock in general in the mid sixties. Around this time, there was a tremendous multi-pronged investigation of the possible development area between traditional folk and rock. Several bands, notably The Youngbloods, the Byrds, Country Joe's Instant Action Jug Band, Jim Kweskin's Jug Band, the Lovin' Spoonful, Jefferson Airplane, Grateful Dead, the Charlatans and the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, started with the idea that various forms of music pulled from America's folk heritage and from the growing wealth of 'contemporary folk' could be modified, implemented with original ideas, and rounded out to become acceptable - both to the changing folk audience and the performers themselves, who were growing out of the limitations of 'straight' folk music. Electric music was generally sneered at, which was one of the reasons for the great popularity of folk in early sixties America... it had the necessary 'intelligent' connotations; no-one with a grain of intelligence and self-respect dared to admit to digging what was considered the mindless garbage that constituted pop music - like Chubby Checker, Frankie Avalon, the 4 Seasons and all the rest of that low, greasy, kid's stuff. "But those kids from the Mersey River made us stand back to back" as Mr Sebastian noted, and the Beatles had the effect of legitimising and "uptowning" pop. Some of the more ambitious folkies got ideas, and that's how folk-rock reared



its weird and wonderful head. Hence all these bands started out of distinct folk roots and each charted a different route as it developed; whereas all started with the Alan Lomax songbag, the Greenwich Village standards, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan and the Holy Modal Rounders as models, they all went different ways as they became smitten with dope, acid, hit records, Fenders, Bob Dylan's lead, the demands of their environment, and changing tastes and ideas generally.

Obviously there's room for a book on this subject (which Ed Ward ought to get down and write), but here and now we must deal with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, who went into traditional and contemporary folk suitable for jugband conversion. They didn't get over-academical and root out all the 20s jug band tunes, but instead developed a melee of old and new - so their early sound was primarily acoustic and tended to sound rather Bob Kerr Whoopie Bandish, with clarinets, banjos and megaphone vocals very prominent on numbers ranging from 'Gonna sit right down and write myself a letter' and 'Hard Hearted Hanna' to 'Euphoria' and 'Candy Man'.

By the time Liberty Records signed them up and they started work on a first album, Jackson Browne had left to write songs and go solo. (He subsequently achieved vast word-of-mouth underground charisma and signed with Elektra, who vainly tried to extract a satisfactory album, after which he played back-up guitar for Nico, both live and on the 'Chelsea Girl' album, and gained further esteem when Tom Rush "discovered" him and recorded some of his songs in early 1968. No doubt you know all about his current

comings and goings as a much vaunted Asylum superstar). John, younger brother of manager Bill McEuen, then joined and the band attacked two fronts; the old Paradox Club, which, although a hive of seething talent, was treated largely as a "place where you could go where your parents couldn't find you", and their first Liberty (later UA) album, which was begun in December 1966.

Their recording career got off to a flying start. From their first album, Liberty selected a song written by their old mates Copeland/Noonan, 'Buy For Me The Rain', to release as a single and within weeks of its release in January 67, it sold over a million, and enabled them to get pretty snooty with their old acquaintances as well as to embark on ill-planned tours of the nation.

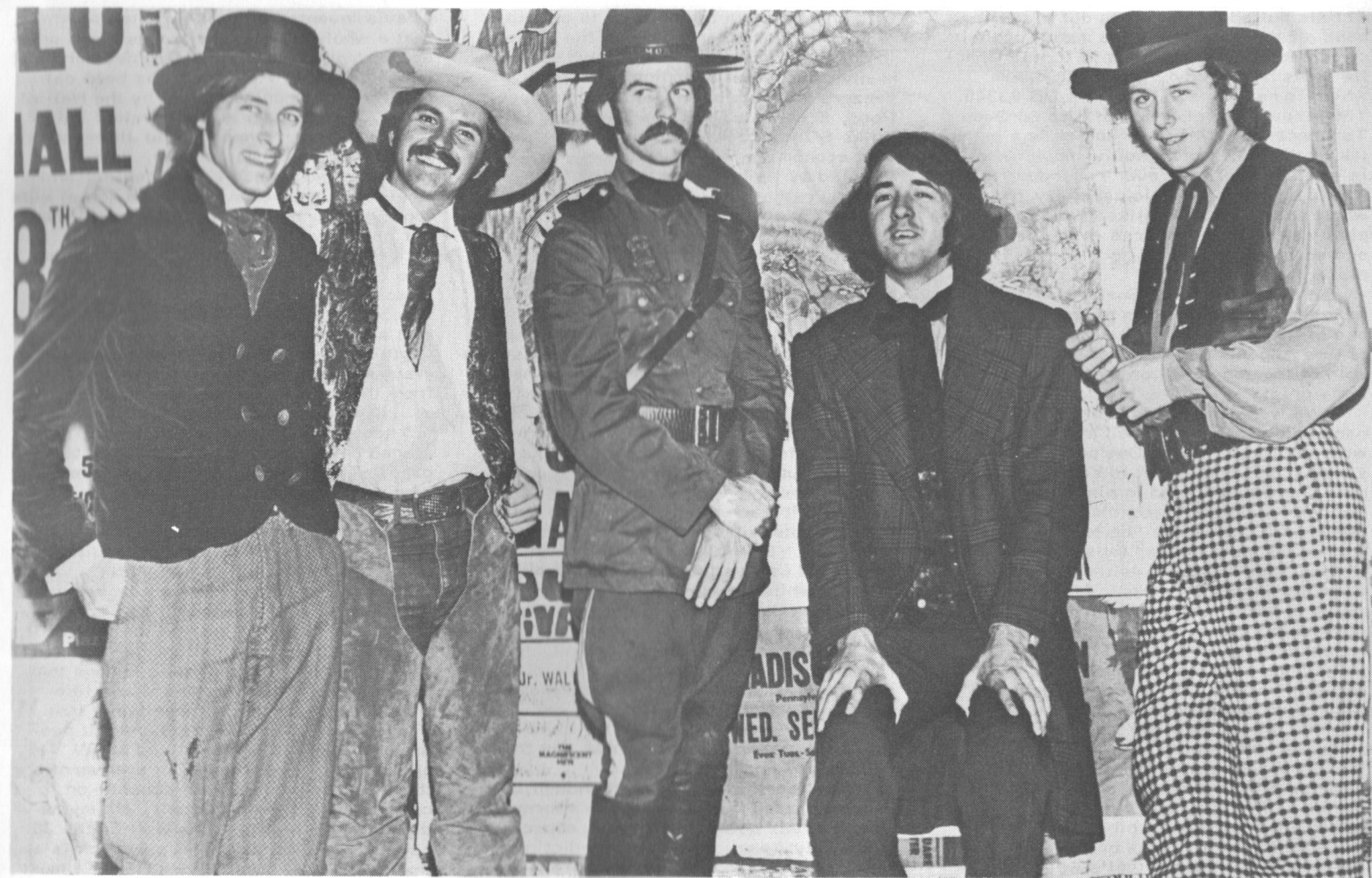
With their guitars, banjo, washboard, jug and washtub bass, they'd stagger on stage to headline concerts at which bands like the Doors (on the verge of an international hit with 'Light My Fire') were their support group. Other memorable bills they graced with their presence included one featuring the Jefferson Airplane, the Buffalo Springfield, the Doors, the Association, the Strawberry Alarm Clock and the Dirt Band - more like a festival line-up. Their equipment was rudimentary and often downright crude, amplified by the best pa they could afford - which wasn't much. Looking back, John McEuen (to whom I was talking) reckons that it couldn't have been possible for more than the front 500 of the 15,000 audience to hear a thing they played.

Neither of their first two albums, 'The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band' (May 67) and 'Ric-

ochet' (Nov 67), were released here, but an amalgamation of the best parts of both, 'Pure Dirt', was eventually put out in England, though it's now long deleted. The music contained in these albums is hardly timeless, but is interesting nevertheless, and shows how they've developed from those shambling amateurish beginnings.

The same thing happened with their next two American releases 'Rare Junk' (April 68) and 'Alive' (March 69). On the English amalgamation, 'Dead and Alive', UA's Andrew Lauder managed to cram the whole of 'Alive' (except one song) on one side, and all but 4 tracks of 'Rare Junk' on the other. Once again this album is now unobtainable, but rare collector's item copies may be unearthed in second hand shops. If you do manage to get hold of one, you'll see how Music Hall/New Vaudeville Bandy they used to be in this, their middle incarnation, though for a while they dabbled with a major electrification project, which failed because they had no idea how to handle the technical aspects. But these albums are very far removed from their current work: "A year or so after we started, we got a couple of electric instruments. . . . and a year after that, we learned how to use them. These days, about half the stuff we do is electric and we feel very confident about our ability to go onstage anywhere, anytime and in any situation and make a go of it".

After their hit single had grown dusty and they'd been unable to follow it, times got tough and audiences dwindled despite their efforts to spruce the act up with electric guitars and drums. Kunkel had disappeared a few months earlier and Chris Darrow moved in, from the legend-



Above: the current Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, though considerably less hirsute than they are at present: left to right; Jimmie Fadden, Jeff Hanna, Les Thompson, John McEuen and Jim Ibbotson. On the opposite page you can see the 1968 era Dirt Band, all done up in neat double-breasted suits, white shirts and snappy ties! (Thank God they're not like that anymore)

ary Kaleidoscope (now there was a band), to sing, play fiddle and guitar. Most of their bookings came not as a result of wild enthusiasm but because promoters were impressed by their ability to play wider appeal music than most long-haired bands, and because they were cute and inoffensive. So, weird gigs in weirder places became the norm until manager McEuen managed to secure them a star part in the film 'Paint Your Wagon'. Unfortunately, some ham fisted berk in the cutting room decided to dispense with most of the band's contribution and deprived us of what could have been some fascinating footage.

But, by the time they'd done the film part, they grown disenchanted by the way things weren't fitting into place. The buzz, as they say, was off them, and in January 1969 they split up and went their separate ways, having buried, as they thought, the last memories of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

Jeff Hanna and Chris Darrow (who recently visited England to make a reggae album with Greyhound!) went off to join John Ware and John London (who both went on to become the rhythm section of Mike Nesmith's First National Band) as Linda Ronstadt's backing band, Ralph Barr and his wife went off to become a folksinging duo and have since vanished without trace, Jimmie Fadden became a session man and Captain Beefheart's chauffeur, Les Thompson bought a mule and followed the original Lewis and Clark trail to Oregon, his observations of which will soon appear in a weighty tome, and John McEuen joined Andy Williams. Wait a minute, I thought, . . . this guy is pulling my plonker, . . . surely he's joking.

In fact he wasn't. McEuen did indeed play guitar, Hawaiian guitar, and banjo (on the jaunty songs) behind Mr Williams for several months as a bona fide member of his orchestra, during his Las Vegas cabaret season. (Gulp! Cringe!)

The following June, John McEuen was quietly bashing his carrot in the gents' room of a club called The Golden Bear in Huntington Beach, when who should walk in but Jeff Hanna. It isn't recorded which band was playing the club at the time but Jeff was heard to remark "listen to that bunch of clowns out there - driving the audience crazy. . . . we could wipe 'em out". It was evident that Hanna had spent most of the intervening months in morose and drunken lament about the good old days of the Dirt Band. . . . tears of nostalgia rolled down his cheeks as he fell into a blubbing heap on the cold stone floor. "From that point!" says John, "it was obvious that we'd have to get back together and play. It's a pretty egotistical thing to say, but we felt confident that we could blow a group like that right off the stage - or at least we wanted to try. Anyway, it was a good excuse for us to start talking to each other again".

So they re-assembled themselves - or at least 4 of them did; McEuen, Thompson, Hanna and Fadden. "We had to go out shopping for a fifth member and fortunately, Jim was only the third guy we tried". The Jim was Jim Ibbotson who, since coming West, had spent some time with Skip Battin's Evergreen Blueshops and had auditioned for Poco. "He was great for us because he came up through a completely different school of music; we had been interested in Doc Watson, folk

and bluegrass, but he grew up listening to and playing rock'n'roll. . . . lived right through the whole Dick Clark Philadelphia thing. That's when we really started to sort ourselves out; we'd used drums before, but this was the first time we began to use them properly and we spent several months rehearsing - six days a week, at least 7 hours a day. We determined to start again with a vengeance and to do everything properly, or rather to our satisfaction, including recording, which we'd never really been pleased with in the past".

During the next four months, a great spirit of loyalty developed within the band and members never missed the daily rehearsals in Long Beach - if one failed to turn up, then the others who did were wasting their time, so absenteeism was deterred by the fresh spirit which gripped the group. They didn't discuss direction particularly, but merely selected songs they all liked and worked them up, which has been their subsequent policy - they hear a song they like and learn it. In this way, their repertoire became more and more eclectic until they could command a great variety of styles (shown to great advantage on 'All The Good Times!').

The Band's 'Music From Big Pink' had been a great influence on their approach: "That was exactly where we were trying to hit; quiet, funky rock. They really helped us out by proving it was possible. . . . I think they helped a lot of people that way". They sure did - for instance, a couple of other UA bands, the ever magnificent Brinslies and Clover (a nice band who seem to have disappeared).

As their part of the bargain, United

Artists pulled all the stops out to get the band off the ground and the result of their combined efforts was seen in 'Uncle Charlie & his dog Teddy', a terrific album which is readily available on LBG 83345. The sleeve, the creation of (Jan &) Dean Torrence's Kittyhawk Graphics is a painstaking piece of work and the music within is some of the finest ever recorded. John: "We'd chosen the music carefully from a whole load of stuff we liked, and we had plenty of time to rehearse everything to our satisfaction.... I kinda like that album the best".

So do I. 'Some of Shelly's Blues', from the pen of Mike Nesmith, has to be one of the finest tracks ever to come out of Los Angeles. How exactly did they get hold of the song and convert it into such tasty grist?

"We were, as I said, rehearsing very hard and whenever we had a day off, we went visiting friends. One particular Sunday, Jeff and I went to see Mike Nesmith - Jeff had played in his First National Band for a couple of months during our lay-off. It was just a 'hello, Mike, gee you've got a big house, let's have a game of ping-pong' sort of visit and to let him know we were a band again, looking for songs to play. Jeff had heard Linda Ronstadt doing 'Some of Shelly's Blues' and we asked Mike if we could hear it - so he gave us a tape of that song and another called 'Propinquity', both of which we worked on and recorded on Uncle Charlie."

"I'll tell you how we got some more songs for that album; we were down at the Troubadour one night and this guy came up offering us his songs. We'd had the idea of writing our own stuff, but we would always listen to other people's material to see if it was better - in which case we'd do theirs - that's why most of 'Uncle Charlie' is by other people! Well, this guy played us some of his songs and we ended up recording them.... that was Kenny Loggins".

"We recorded 'Mr Bojangles' on that album as well; it was a song that Jeff had wanted to do for a couple of years but he never got round to finding out all the words. It happened that Jim had been driving around with a copy of the record (by Jerry Jeff Walker) in the trunk of his car, so we worked from that - Jeff wrote down the words and then taught the song to us. That's how we like to do all our tunes - start off with just voice and guitar and develop it from there without hearing and therefore being influenced by any other finished versions.... that's why our 'Mr Bojangles' is different from other versions".

Much to everyone's great surprise (because over the years it had been put out as a single by 3 other artists without too much success), when released as a 45, it became a huge hit, putting our boys high on the charts once more. (Did you know that Mr Bojangles was a real bloke? His name was Bill Robinson and he actually lived as the song describes. Listen to David Bromberg's recent version too).

'All the good times', released here last year on UAS 29284, was even more diverse in its styles; Nashville country rock'n'roll, Hank Williams, cajun, Hotlives harmonies, contemporary folk, Los Angeles country rock, Louisiana music, live recordings, fiction, etc... add a dash of humour and a pinch of Aspen and you've got 'All the good times', an excellent (if somewhat erratic in parts) album, sadly under-promoted, under-rated and under-purchased in Britain.

By this time, the band had moved to Aspen and other scattered locations in Colorado, spearheading a trend for people

with any sense in their heads to get out of LA and point themselves in the direction of the sweet air of the Rockies.... the Hunter Thompson stomping grounds. (Other geezers with homes in Colorado include Poco, Stephen Stills, the Dillards, Fred Wilks & the Spoons, etc). Not only can vast economies in time and money be effected by living in the middle of the country rather than the edge, but there are barely a million people living in the whole state as opposed to 13 million or so cooped up in Los Angeles alone.... and there's skiing, clean air, friendly faces and on a clear day you can see England. John: "Where I live, a small town a few miles outside Denver, there is a mountain on each side and though nothing ever seems to happen there, it has everything I need".

Jeff Hanna: "The original reason for moving was not to get into Colorado, but to get out of LA. We'd played in Denver a while before and we'd thought about moving, but the thing that deterred us was that we'd lived in California all our lives and it was unthinkable just to pull up our roots and sever ties with friends and so on. Eventually, the thing which convinced us was that huge earthquake in LA a while back; we were out touring and it took us two days to get through to our wives on the phone - people all over the world were phoning LA and all the lines and switchboards were jammed up solid. When we did get through, they were just sobbing and really shaken up, because we lived right near the centre of the quake.... and it was on that day that we decided to clear out".

"That earthquake was big enough, but was only small compared to the enormous San Andreas quake that people, especially in the Bay Area, have been predicting and fearing for the last ten years. Edgar Casey, who had always been 99.44% right about his prophecies, went into a trance and said it would happen in June 1969 - and all his supplementary predictions came true; mudslides, oil on the seas.... but no earthquake, which was really a most pleasant surprise".

"Part of California will possibly eventually disappear into the sea, but if they have this earthquake, it's going to be really horrible because the housing and planning is so bad. For instance, after the terrible quake and fire in San Francisco in 1906, they just filled in the great fissures in the earth and built houses right on top of the fault lines. If the earth does open up again, those houses are going to drop like sand in an hourglass".

"Anyway, within 35 hours of getting back home, we'd got all our possessions loaded up and we drove to Colorado. It's real pretty there, and also, over the last 6 months or so, it's become very vogueish to live there, especially in Aspen, but they're controlling development in order to curb too rapid an expansion.... like over the last year they only built around ten new homes. Of course, during the season, Aspen becomes crowded out with the jet set but you can ignore and avoid all that fashion number very easily".

The latest NGDB (I bet you were waiting for me to do that) album, 'Will the circle be unbroken', is an amazing thing. A triple traditional country music album containing 37 tracks featuring the band fronted by various Nashville greats like Doc Watson, Earl Scruggs, Mother Maybelle Carter, Roy Acuff, Merle Travis, Tom Copley and all, all of whom (except Copley) have exerted great influence over the Dirt Band through the years. John: "It features so many of our idols - people at the very roots of country music; like Earl Scruggs invented the 5 string banjo style that thousands of people copied, Merle

Travis invented a style of guitar picking that a whole lot of country musicians grew up on, Mother Maybelle recorded her first record in 1928, Roy Acuff has been called the 'King of Country Music' by the Hall of Fame, Doc Watson is the greatest guitar player in country music, and Jimmy Martin is the best bluegrass singer. It took a while for these people to accept us and to see that we weren't just a bunch of kids fooling around, and the album has come out really well, I think".

Jeff: "It started with Earl Scruggs, who heard us and expressed an interest in doing some recording together - and we just flipped out, of course, flattered that a living legend like him would want anything to do with us. Then he got Doc Watson along, and it sort of snowballed from there; it wasn't pre-planned at all.... It just grew and grew until it became a 3 record set, recorded in direct live stereo over a period of only about ten days. The original idea was to select a double album's worth of the best stuff, but we decided it was all best stuff and we ended up using just about all of it - so it's sort of like a portfolio of traditional country music".

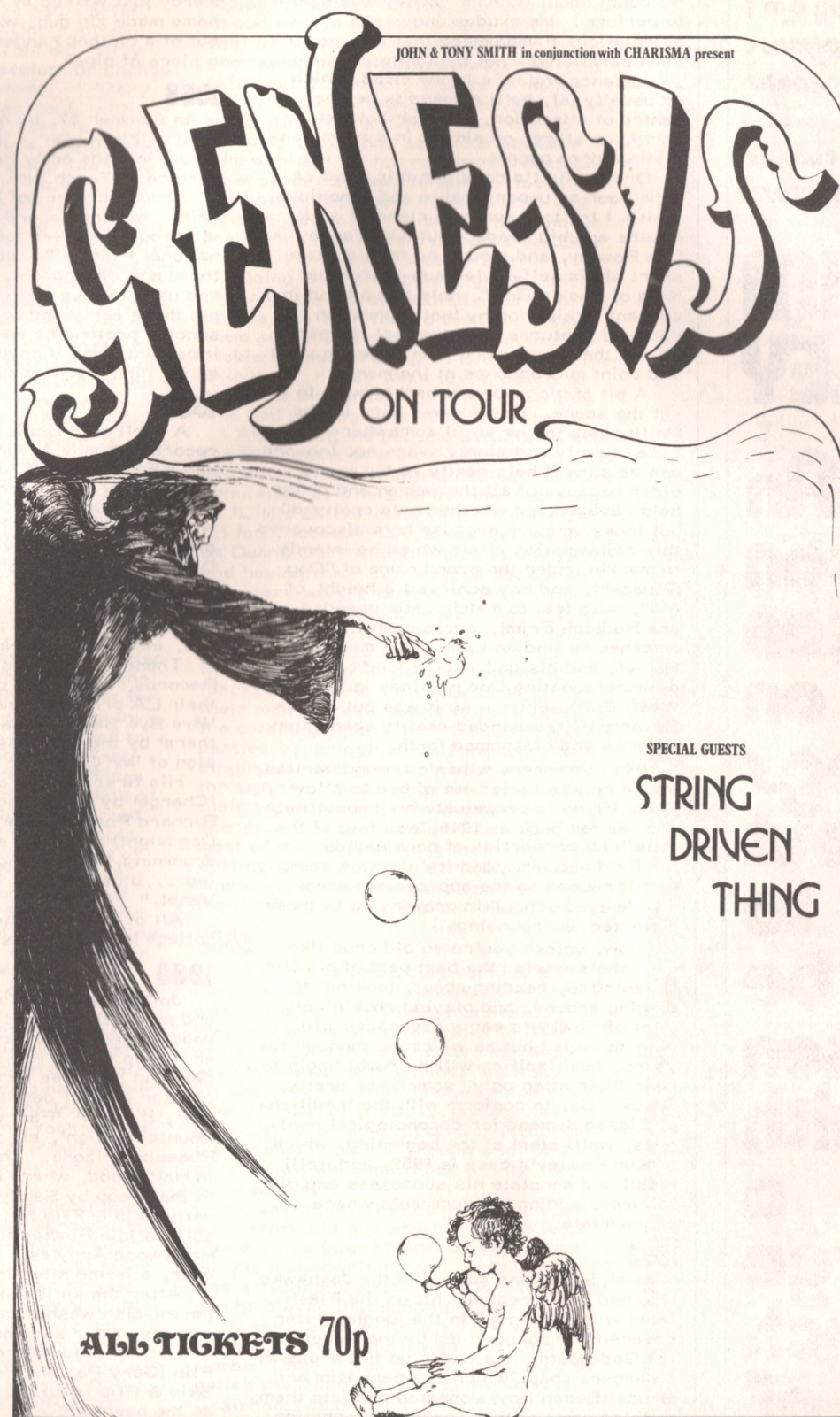
No doubt about it, it's an impressive album, linking the generations of country musicians in a way that, on the face of it, would have seemed most unlikely in view of the snooty, bigotted, closed shop that older Tennessee musicians would like Nashville to remain. (I heard only last night on Alastair Cooke's excellent programme that until 1968, it had been against the law to teach, or even mention, the theory of evolution in schools or colleges; in God's bible belt, old myths die hard and slowly). As well as the 36 country "standards", the last track is an instrumental of 'Both Sides Now', a most peculiarly out of place afterthought - but never mind.

Due to the production cost/anticipated sales balance, UA are importing limited stocks into England rather than going through a manufacturing process here, but copies should be available easily enough (if you've got the money).

Of course, country music is only one facet of the Dirt Band's music and these ancient Nashville pioneers would probably throw up if they spent much time listening to the sort of stuff popular in the McEuen and Hanna households, for instance.... the Allman Brothers, Ike & Tina Turner, Danny O'Keefe, Jerry Lee Lewis, the Band, Buddy Holly, Free, Eddie Cochran, Brinsley Schwarz, Poco, Pure Prairie League, Procol Harum and countless hundreds more.

Isn't it about time they ventured to Britain - surely the hour is nigh to unleash their ineffable jelly on the waiting, expectant horde of Zigzaggers, who quiver and drool in anticipation of a live performance by the Dirt Band? John: "Well, to tell the truth, it's up to people like you to spread the word because we can't really justify the expense of a visit until our name is a bit better known.... but I tell you, for the last couple of years, all we've wanted to do is get to England.... if only we can find a way of absorbing some of the costs. All our friends seem to have been there.... sometimes we feel like the guy who's never been out of his back yard". Pete

STOP PRESS: Instant obsolescence! Just as we were about to send this stuff off to the printers, we learnt that the Dirt Band were going to visit England for 4 days at the end of January.... so by the time this is printed, they'll have been and gone! Hope you saw them!



FEBRUARY 4th:	Hippodrome, Bristol.	19th:	New Theatre, Oxford.
9th:	The Rainbow.	21st:	York University. (Tickets available from Sound Effects MacKenzie's & S.U. Shop)
10th:	The Dome, Brighton.	22nd:	City Hall, Newcastle.
12th:	The Guildhall, Plymouth. (Tickets on this date only, 60p)	23rd:	Lancaster University. (Tickets available from Reception & usual Agents)
14th:	The Great Hall, Exeter University. (Tickets available from Devonshire House)	24th:	Free Trade Hall, Manchester.
16th:	Greens Playhouse, Glasgow.	25th:	DeMontfort Hall, Leicester.
17th:	The City Hall, Sheffield.	26th:	Civic Hall, Dunstable.
18th:	The Town Hall, Birmingham.		

GENESIS ALBUM ON CHARISMA. FOXTROT CAS 1058. STRING DRIVEN THING ON CHARISMA. CAS 1062



"Not only am I
one of the most
exceptional humans
on earth
I am also the fore-runner
of the next species!"

KIM FOWLEY

An
American
tradition
on
legs
.....but
to
be
taken
with
a
large
pinch
of
salt
(some
of
the
time)

No doubt about it, Kim Fowley was born to perform. He exudes and reeks of an ostentatious flamboyance that I've never seen paralleled - not by a mile. If there's an audience and he's in the mood (which he usually is), he'll demand to be the centre of attraction, whether he's at a party, on stage, or simply in a room containing three people.

Ordinarily I'd consider this kind of behaviour an unpardonable and obnoxious trait - I try to steer well clear of wide mouths and big heads - but Kim Fowley is Kim Fowley, and though he falls a little short of his self-styled sub-title, "the King of Rock'n'Roll", he's had a hand in so many praiseworthy (not to mention dubious) ventures over the last 15 years or so, that I was more than eager to visit and point microphones at the man.

A bit of biographical background to set the scene. Fowley was born in the Philippines (so he says) somewhere between twenty and eighty years ago (no-one can be sure if he's really 20 but looks older because of all the women and drugs he's ravaged, or whether he's really 80 but looks younger because he's discovered this rejuvenation elixir which he intends to market under the brand name of "Dog Squack"), and has achieved a height of 6'5", with feet to match. His grandad, one Rudolph Friml, wrote such film score smashes as 'Indian Love Call' and 'Rose Marie', and his dad made a load of bread by impersonating Doc Holliday in the tv Wyatt Earp series - so it was out of this Beverly Hill/expanded reality scene that he grew and blossomed forth.

(He remembers wild Hollywood parties where he was turfed out of bed to allow Errol Flynn to perpetuate his reputation, and, as far back as 1946, was told of the beneficial properties of cocaine; John Garfield recommended its use as a stimulant if rubbed on the appropriate area... a wide eyed schoolkid growing up in those distorted surroundings!)

Now, unless you're an old crud like me, who's wasted the best part of his life listening to, reading about, looking at, digging around, and playing rock'n'roll, a lot of Fowley's early escapades will ring no bells, but as we creep through the years, familiarities will no doubt begin to rear their often ugly, sometimes pretty, heads. So, to conform with the traditional Zigzag demand for chronological neatness, we'll start at the beginning, which in Kim Fowley's case is 1957, and we'll detail and annotate his successes and his failures, adding his comments where appropriate:

1957

Met, joined and sang with the Jayhawks, who had had a regional hit on the Flash label with 'Stranded in the jungle' (later covered and popularised by the Cadets & the Gadabouts), but ended up flat broke in a barbers shop, which is where Kim and Bruce (Beach Boy) Johnston ran into them. Nothing came of that, except celebration as being a prototype racially integrated vocal group

Next band; the Sleepwalkers, a high school group, with Sandy Nelson (drums), Bruce Johnston (bass), Phil Spector (on occasional guitar) and Kim as roadie, occasional singer and robber: "We'd stage wild parties and whilst the band was playing, we'd go around stealing wallets and purses, and rip off accessories from the cars parked outside, which our friends in the Jayhawks would fence for us". As the Sleepwalkers, they went to Dolphin Studios to cut some demos and happened to witness the murder of owner John Dolphin (who'd written the amazing 'Buzz, Buzz, Buzz' for the Hollywood Flames on Ebb Records in 1958); "this guy called

Percy just walked in and shot him with a home made zip gun, which he'd put together out of a clothes hanger, rubber bands and a piece of pipe".

1958

In Summer 57, he had polio, but recovered within a year - just in time to be thrust into the army for a year's national service. (Tough luck there, Kim).

From there he got a job with Dig Magazine, writing record reviews, and simultaneously worked for American International Films. "My boss, in charge of the music department, was an alcoholic and used to give me ten dollars a week to get there early and cover up for his absence - pretend he was out doing some important work if anybody phoned or asked for him. He was drunk all the time".

1959

A spell with Doris Day's publishing/record company Arwin Records (who'd had a number 1 with 'Jennie Lee' by Jan & Arnie, predecessors of Jan & Dean) followed, during which time he worked with Bruce (Johnston) & Jerry (several different people), the Roosters, Bobby Day (who was arranging material), and Mel Grayson. "Then Bruce produced 'Teen Beat' by Sandy Nelson, which was a big hit, and I later produced two follow ups, including 'Big Noise from Winnetka'".

Thence to work as a plugger for Tamla Records, who'd just started up. "I was their LA promotion man, and I promoted 'Bye Bye Baby' by Mary Wells, 'Way over there' by the Miracles, and the black version of 'Mr Custer'".

His first session as a producer was 'Charge' by the Renegades. "That was Richard Podolar (now producing Three Dog Night) on guitar and bass, Sandy drumming, Bruce singing and me screaming... plus hoofbeat imitations by Nick Venet."

All of this time, he was still attending college between times.

1960

Joined Skip (Battin, then Clyde Battyn and now a Byrd) & Flip (Gary Paxton) as roadie, promotion man, and later producer. Skip & Flip had several hits between 1959 and 1961 (see forthcoming Byrds chapter for full details) including 'Cherry Pie', 'It was I', 'Fancy Nancy' and 'The Mountains High', all on Brent Records of Phoenix Arizona. The records were cut in Hollywood, where Kim was introduced to the group by Sandy Nelson, but eventually Skip & Flip fell out and Flip (Gary) split to join Fowley in a group called the Hollywood Argyles. In the interim, however, a weird situation developed:

After the split, Skip got a new Flip (an ex-dish washer called Dave Martinez, who also later sang on 'Alley Oop') but that venture floundered and the original Flip (Gary Paxton) re-formed yet another Skip & Flip (with drummer Rod Marshall as the new Skip - he was later drummer in one of the road bands that went out as the Hollywood Argyles, and a little later was in the bogus Paul Revere & the Raiders, who were also the Gamblers, who Fowley produced doing 'Moon Dog'/'LSD 19' - the first acid song - on World Pacific Records in late 1961). All very complicated (and of little interest, I'm sure, to anybody except me - and Charlie Gillett maybe), but you haven't heard anything yet: at one point, both Skip & Flip bands cut the same song, 'Doubt', which was simultaneously released on different labels, and the song had also been released by the original Skip & Flip on a Time Records sampler! Enough of this... I'll go mad.

On to the Argyles.

1961

The Hollywood Argyles had a brief spate of fame with 'Alley Oop', a huge international hit, but fizzled out fairly quickly as Fowley's obsession for change and new ventures ran rampant. "Gary Paxton sang lead on 'Alley Oop', with background vocals by me, Gary's tall ugly red-headed bitch of the time, Dallas Frazier (who also wrote the song) and Dave Martinez (the bogus Flip). Gary sang lead on all the hits (another was 'Bug eyed critter called Sam') and I sang lead on all the flops, but we split the royalties 50/50. The band on 'Alley Oop' was some guy called Hodge, who'd been in the old Penguins vocal group, Ronnie Sillicoe on drums (who also played on 'Western Movies' by the Olympics and later played with Mayall and Ray Charles) and Harper Cosby on stand-up bass (who had played on the Johnny Otis hits)". 26 different road bands capitalised on the hit; they organised a black band, an Italian band, a punk kid band, a Puerto Rican band, a Jewish band, etc... this was the era of little independent labels and groups without faces - so bands could easily masquerade as the originals. So, high school audiences in 26 different cities could see the Hollywood Argyles on stage simultaneously. (Do you believe all that?)

Kim sang with, co-produced and also co-published the Argyles.

Interesting story: 'Alley Oop' was also a lesser hit for Dante & the Evergreens, who covered the song: "they were at the same high school as me but we were in rival gangs, or car clubs as we used to call them; I was in the Pagans of West Los Angeles and they were in the Sires... and Ryan O'Neill was in the Jets of West LA as a matter of fact. We used to go out at weekends and stomp people, smash car windscreens and that sort of thing. Our idols were Jerry Lee Lewis and the Del Vikings; as soon as any of their records, like 'High School Confidential' or 'Whispering Bells' came on the car radio, we'd ram cars off the road in our excitement... we were crazy. In fact, I still have juvenile delinquent type traits".

Was instrumental in setting up the Indigo label for whom he produced a string of top ten hits, mostly backed by the old Hollywood Argyles recording band: 'Gee Whiz' and 'Honest I do' by the Innocents, 'A thousand stars' by Kathy Young & the Innocents, and 'Diamonds & Pearls' by the Paradons (which he didn't produce, but had 25% publishing on).

With Gary Paxton, he produced the earliest recordings (for the Gardena label) by Paul Revere & the Raiders, who he'd run across in summer 59 (just prior to working for Doris Day) when he was working as a DJ on KGE in Idaho ("the voice of Treasure Valley"). "We got them in the studio and did 'Sharon' and 'Like Long Hair', which was a precursor of 'Nutrocker' and is available on Guy Stevens' Testament to Rock'n'Roll on Sue/Island Records. We produced, promoted and published their stuff, and then while Paul was in the Army we carried on the name with different personnel, including Leon Russell touring as Paul".

1962

'Nut Rocker' year. In early 1962, he produced 'Nutrocker' twice: "the first time was with a group I called Jack B Nimble & the Quicks for the Del Rio label, but the woman who'd put up the money decided she wouldn't release it, so I went over to Rendezvous Records and they said they'd put it out; so I re-recorded it with the Rendezvous house band, who we called B Bumble & the Stingers". The record

was a smash, of course - even got to the top of the charts in England, and returned to our top ten ten years later. Kim, as well as having the initial idea and image, produced, published and wrote the song (which still brings him loads of money via the ELP version), but though he made several more excellent demos with B Bumble, they never came out because Kim wouldn't let his royalty percentage be eroded. Shrewd fellow... looks at everything from both the aesthetic and Jewish viewpoints; "I'm in this business for the money" he told the guys at CBS, though it is obvious that he isn't.

Being another faceless group, the record company assembled a bunch of people who even toured England (I saw them at the California Ballroom in Dunstable) masquerading as B Bumble & the Stingers. "They were just a bunch of slob off the street - just horrible kids who had nothing to do with the record".

After that, he became associated with the Rivingtons in a strange, multi-faceted project. The Rivingtons had gained some reputation as The Sharps, and had sung on 'Little Bitty Pretty One', a massive hit for Thurston Harris, as well as being on Duane Eddy's first album in late 1958, and having their own singles put out on Lee Hazelwood's Guyden label. Their fame had declined, however, and they'd decided to start afresh as the Rivingtons. Fowley produced a couple of hits for them, including 'Papa Oom Mow Mow' (backed by 'Mama Oom Mow Mow'), but their main pursuit seems to have been the catering business. "We used to cater parties... bringing in all the food, and singing for the guests, whilst we rifled through their belongings and stole all of their valuables - it was another of those scenes. You see, in San Francisco, most of the roadies make their money by dealing dope, but in LA it's a different scene - the musicians and roadies make their money by stealing".

1963

"As well as producing various surf records, which didn't do too much, I was in the roller skating business... staging dances at roller rinks in California. I used to run the dances, and I used to appear with a band, impersonating hit groups - the ones whose photos hadn't been circulated at all... groups like the Stereos, who had a hit on Cup Records. We figured it did the groups a lot of good, because we were much better than they were anyway".

"I was hitch-hiking one day, and got a lift from this guy who turned out to be David Gates (now of Bread); he told me he was a songwriter, and I told him I was a record producer - so we went back and he played this song he'd just written... and Candice Bergen, who was a friend of mine, said it was a certain number One". Kim got 3 chicks, who he called the Murmaids, to do the song on Chatahoochee Records (which was Kim's own label), and it sold a million. That was 'Popsicles & Icicles', which was a number 1 in the States, but didn't do a thing in England - lost in the Merseybeat.

1964

After producing loads of unsuccessful follow-ups to 'Popsicles' (and leasing the first Kama Sutra productions for his label), Kim came to England to check out the British music which was successfully drowning out the traditional American domination of world pop music. Here he teamed up with his old friend PJ Proby, who was living in London and causing pandemonium in the charts, and became a legendary looner....



A bootleg photograph of the man - in his 'Whistle Test' garb and newly acquired hairstyle. Kim, who thought all copies of this picture and the negative had been destroyed, was horrified to find we had it. "Even a legend can photograph badly!"

.....as well as Proby's stabiliser, friend and adviser. "But our friendship ended over a girl called Sara Leighton - we both fancied her, but he pulled her and that choked me off; so I left him to fall apart and went back to LA".

1965

Early 65, with the Byrds happening at Ciro's, Kim became a dancer in Vito and the Hands, a mad dancing/theatre troupe who later toured with the Byrds as enthusiasm rousers: "Vito was the real Tim Leary - he was doing everything that Leary ever said, but he didn't have the media coverage. But he was on that levelhe's a great guy".

"Then I worked for GNP Crescendo Records as a talent scout, but they turned down everything I brought them, including the Mamas & Papas and Danny Hutton.... and then they fired me".

Zappa then called on Kim to join the Mothers as singer/happener in the very early days of the band. He appeared on stage with them and is featured on the 'Freak Out' album, singing 'Help I'm a rock' and 'Who are the brain police?'

1966

Returning to England, he became involved with a whole string of ventures:

"I named Family, who had just come down to London, and produced them doing 'The Great Pretender' (the old Platters song) and 'Silver Dagger' (from a Joan Baez LP), but no-one was interested at the time"

"I produced Mason & Capaldi when they were in Deep Feeling, and Slade when they were the In Between on EMI, and I co-wrote 'Portobello Road' with Cat Stevens (which came out as the b-side of his first Deram single, 'I love my dog!')

"I produced 'Gloria's Dream' by the Belfast Gypsies (a spin off of Them, with the MacAuley brothers from the old band) and recorded 'They're coming to take me away' for CBS, covering Napoleon 14th's American hit. I was on 'Ready Steady Go' singing that.... and then I toured as Napoleon 14th.... why not?"

"I also recorded 4 tracks for French Vogue Records".

During this same visit, he recorded with Mick Fleetwood, Keith Moon and Richie Blackmore, but can't remember the details of that, and he also produced the Soft Machine's first single 'Love makes sweet music'/'Feel in Reelin and Squealin'. "I met them at the Roundhouse and then we went into the studio; Chas Chandler didn't like the a-side and made them re-record it, but they kept the same b-side.... that was great, wasn't it? You should have heard the a-side we didmuch better than the one which came out".

1967

Returning to LA, he founded the House for Homeless Groups with Michael Lloyd (later the Osmonds producer) and several groups and musicians "rented my facilities and drained my brain".

Among the people hanging out there were October Country, who developed into Three Dog Night, the Sparrow, who became Steppenwolf, and the Rose Gardennot to mention guest appearances by Jim Morrison.

"During that time, I wrote the b-side of the Rose Garden's hit 'Next plane to London', and produced the only solo single by Joey Covington (later in the Airplane), which was a version of 'Boris the spider'.

1968

Joined Liberty Records as a talent

scout and artist, and also researched appropriate titles for 3 Ventures albums. Found Johnny Winter in Texas, which led to his recording 'Progressive Blues Experiment' before Winter was "discovered" by Steve Paul.

Produced the Seeds' obscurest tracks, 'Wild Blood'/'Falling off the edge of my mind', released on GNP. "Sky Saxon has a new band now; they recently crashed the Kinks party in LA and played a set there - just burst in off the street and played unannounced. He's a weird guygot stopped by the police in Dallas a couple of years ago and when they asked to see his identity, he showed them a picture of Jesus Christ..... and I heard that he just threw his dog out because it wasn't a vegetarian".

Began to record a series of solo LPs - see a bit later.

1969

Produced AB Skhy's second album on MGM, which featured Ben Sidran, Carly Cooke and Tim Davis among others.

Produced "the first ecology album"- 'We must survive' by Earth Island for Phillips, and Gene Vincent's Dandelion album 'I'm back and I'm proud', featuring Skip Battin and the ubiquitous Mars Bonfire (brother of Steppenwolf's Jerry Edmonton, and himself an ex member of the pre-Steppenwolf group Sparrow). "Gene asked me if I'd do that album, and we got the musicians together between us. I don't think that either Gene or his widow ever saw a financial statement on that record, but I got a letter saying it had sold so many thousand copies, but the cost of the album had exceeded the sales income, so I only got session fees on that one".

Was MC at the Toronto Peace/Rock Festival at which the Plastic Ono Band played and recorded.

Went to Scandinavia and produced an album by Wigwam ("the Finnish Beatles") in Helsinki, and albums by Contact and Scorpion in Sweden - as well as a solo single recorded under the name of King Lizard. Also devastated several clubs in Scandinavia by performing in person.

1970

Re-united with Skip Battin as a song writing partnership: "He and I had been eying each other as potential songwriting partners, and when he joined the Byrds, the opportunity arose and we took advantage of it". His songs began to appear on Byrd albums: 'Untitled' in 1970, 'Byrd Maniax' in 1971 and 'Farther Along' in 1972 (see appropriate chapters in Byrds serial in due course).

Wrote song for the Cisco Pike film soundtrack, recorded and released as a single by the Sir Douglas Quintet.

"I also played the Whiskey A Go Go in LA, with a band including Skip and Mars and Elliot (Winged Eel Fingerling) Ingber on lead guitar. We did 'Rumble' by Link Wray, and 'Surfin Bird' by the Trashmen and all sorts of stuff - and I wore a gold suit and make-up. It was a total outrage; people were smashing each other up on stage, burning tablecloths and going mad, and because of the pandemonium, they wouldn't let me do a second set".

1971

Contributed lyrics for Leo Kottke's 'Mudlark' album, and recorded 30 tracks for an RCA solo album which they never dared to release - 'Outlaw Superman'.

Went to Memphis and Muscle Shoals and even cut a track at Sun Records - 'Daddys in the crazy house', which has so far remained unissued.

Nothing much seems to have happened in 1971.

1972

Released 'I'm Bad' album on Capitol, which sounds like a cross between Edgar Broughton, Captain Beefheart and a wild puking animal. He's backed by Pete Sears, Mars Bonfire, Drachen Theaker among others. (Previous solo albums include 'Love is alive & well', 'In the Underground' 'Outrageous', 'Born to be wild', 'Good Clean Fun' and 'The day the earth stood still')

Went to Hawaii and did some recording and wrote songs for Skip Battin's solo album, which has just been released here on Signpost Records.

Produced the debut album by revival rock band Flash Cadillac & the Continental Kids at Gold Star Studio.

Came to England to look around, write songs, hustle people, record a few hits and get his face spread across all the pop papers (including this one).

Wrote songs with Kerry Scott (see later) and 4 with Ian Hunter, recorded a new album called 'International Heroes', which he reckons will be a big hit here.

1973

Has formed a "rock'n'roll workshop" in England - a bunch of musicians that he came across and he plan to make a load of singles under various names in an attempt to recreate the old days of faceless groups who come and go with the wind. Claims to have discovered a whole lot of potential stars - "the next Stevie Winwood, etc"

Silverhead, Steppenwolf, possibly Mott the Hoople, and Gene Parsons are all recording his compositions.

Plans to return to California in March where he'll begin a partnership with the owners of Gold Star Studio in Hollywood, where Spector, Eddie Cochran, Buffalo Springfield, etc made all their greatest records. Among the first groups which he proposes to produce will be the New Topanga All Stars, featuring Spanky McFarlane (ex Our Gang), Matt Andes (ex Jo Jo Gunne) and others.

And that's just about it.

Having gone through his whole musical career in such detail, I feel I should reveal something about the man himself. The first thing that strikes one is the world in which he appears to live - for instance, what starts as a lucid (if somewhat fanciful) statement, can trail off into his weird and nebulous dream-wonderspheres.... like when I asked him why he wasn't happy with his last solo album: "Let's face it; you are looking at the man who should be the Beatles and the Elvis Presley of the 1970s, but because of the way my albums turn out, I'm not. You've seen my photoI look like a teenage boy, but I'm really ancient, you know. I'm unbelievable on stage, I sing rather well, and I write incredible songs.... but I don't even open my mouth to sing them anymore, because they put wise men to death today - and I'm not going to be put to death". Sometimes he plummets into a well of despondency, and trails out his sorrows and regrets, his fear of growing old and being replaced in ladies' affections for a prettier face, but that's unusual because his favourite subject is Kim Fowley, King of Rock'n'Roll - and he's constantly attended and surrounded by musicians, friends, hangers-on, chicks.... anyone who'll listen to his wild reminiscences. (These stories have, I might add, been very drastically toned down and, in most cases, deleted altogether. They are, like his language, extremely fascinating, to say the least, but would certainly not conform to the standards within which our printers are prepared to operate. Never



Flash Cadillac & the Continental Kids, Fowley progees whose album, which is the best rock'n'roll revival album I've heard, comes out soon on CBS.

mind; I'm storing the tapes of all this filth and obscenity and the whole ghastly lot will appear in my forthcoming book, 'Friends & Heroes')

His 'secretary', a charming young lady, bore the brunt of more crude and savage disrespect than I've ever witnessed; if Womans Lib knew about Fowley, they'd run him out of town. After a very embarrassing dissertation, in which he compared her qualities, he admonished her for happening to speak while the tape recorder was on: "if you talk in the same key as me" he bellowed, "it'll be too jumbled to transcribe - and when I'm dead, that tape will be worth millions of dollars, because I've had 43 gold records and I'm a legend.... when I speak on this level, it's as historic as you having an orgasm. You sometimes forget that I am everything that every human being in the music world wants to be".

In fact, Fowley has been subjected to more press put-downs than most. His records usually get ploughed into the ground by critics, but Fowley doesn't give a toss - he can still walk into the next record company and come out with a very lucrative contract.... he says he's been on 17 different labels as a solo star alone. So, even if the constant criticism does sting down deep, he refuses to admit it; he still parades his lewd, loud and totally conspicuous flamboyance through the highways and byways of Los Angeles, as if he actually does have something that other humans don't possess - his critics, he insists, live in a drab grey world and he just feels sorry that they will never be able to experience the rainbow technicolour streets he walks.

The pop world abounds with Fowley tales, but it's difficult to determine which have any factual basis; it's difficult enough to get all the bullshit onto the sleeve, let alone sift out the truth. For instance, he and his rhythm guitarist friend Mars Bonfire (writer of 'Born to be wild' and other grist) allegedly go out at night and look for dead cats, which they pickle in aspic and store in Fowley's deep freeze. He's supposed to have been arrested, on stage during his act at the Whiskey A Go Go, for "indecency".... something to do with what George Melly calls "yodelling down the canyon", so I believe. Then there are the 9000 or so chicks with whom he claims to have had sexual congress (the printers can't complain about a stupid euphemism like that,

can they?), and the one and a half million dollars he claims to have accumulated over the years. "I'm rich" he says".... never spent a penny of the royalties from my hits - I invested it all, and consequently I'm one of the richest men in America". He's certainly not hard up for a few bob, but I shouldn't be at all surprised if his luxurious lifestyle is built on his wits rather than a solid financial foundation.

One little story I must tell - not from the mouth of Fowley, but from a guy from Chicago who I met. Kim, it seems, had got Capitol Records to organise a tour of big cities to promote 'I'm Bad'.... you know, meeting the local distributors, DJs and press, and holding a reception where he would sing, show off, fool around and pull women. Anyway, the Chicago DJs, a bunch of them anyway, thought they'd pull a trick on the trickster - so he landed at the Airport to find a handful of screaming teenyboppers holding these big placards which said "WELCOME, KIM FOWTREY". This really unnerved him, because he couldn't be sure if they were fooling around or whether it was a serious attempt to honour his arrival, but being Capitol they'd got his name wrong. Then he was hustled into a limousine decorated with streamers - well, not exactly a limousine.... a Volkswagen, in fact - so his knees were touching his chin as they sped off to his hotel.

His songwriting method is intriguing

if not entirely praiseworthy. Instead of waiting for inspiration, he latches onto a subject and milks the idea for all that it's worth.... songs pour out to suit and capitalise on every trend, situation or topic:

'Precious Kate' - about the LA earth quake.

'Portobello Road' - which he wrote with Cat Stevens in the Swinging London days.

'Hungry Planet' - ecology/pollution.

'Glamorous' - glitter/decadence.

'Citizen Kane' - Hollywood nostalgia.

'Central Park' - mugging in New York.

The list is endless; some are great, others are poor, but Fowley certainly has a very quick brain when it comes to floating out a lyric. (He sang an impromptu song into my tape recorder, which encapsulated today's pop world and the features of Zigzag.... the bootleg comes out soon!)

How does he do it? How does he keep up this incessant activity? The answer is simple - he works to a code; Fowley's Ten Commandments for Rock'n'Roll success (which he invented there and then): ONE: Believe in your own dreams TWO: When you've learnt your craft, keep your mouth shut

THREE: Never give a straight answer to anybody - they'll use it to kill you

FOUR: Upon having record success, keep your head and remember you're human

FIVE: Remember you're not unique; your music can be duplicated overnight

SIX: Nothing is permanent, except death and Texas - so make the money while you can, but don't let it take over

SEVEN: Don't make records for your friends - make them to suit the audience, because they're the ones who need music

EIGHT: Don't take yourself too seriously

NINE: Remember there is more to life than the Speakeasy, dope, sex, long hair and trendy clothes

TEN: Allow yourself to grow old gracefully, and read 'Future Shock' at least once a day to understand why you can't be a phenomenon for ever.

At the moment, he's engulfed in his new album (which may even see daylight here), publicising Skip Battin's fine solo album, turning people on to Flash Cadillac & the Continental Kids, and writing songs with a guy called Kerry Scott. (Kerry, an



Irish folkie/minstrel, was walking up Wardour Street from the Marquee where he'd just played a set, and his wife was magnetised by the gleaming white suit and general deportment of this gangling dandy sauntering across the road. It turned out to be Fowley, who was also experiencing vibe-flashes.... and before you could say "alley oop", they were spending all day and all of the night cranking out songs together - Kerry supplying the music to Kim's lyrics). Also he intends to give the film industry the benefit of his wisdom and entrepreneurial skills (he's discovered "the next Raquel Welch").

Over the years, Fowley has often been a source of press amusement and a figure of fun, but, in fact, though a lot of people seem to take him for an idiot, he's nobody's fool. He always has the last laugh... he's a lot shrewder than he ever lets on. And, though he's been responsible for some horrific rubbish in the past, he's also had a hand in some of pop history's greatest classics.

I happened to be with him when he was offered the job of ringmaster/producer of a 'supersession' album involving Roger Chapman, Keith Moon, Tony Ashton and a whole load more "frustrated in their present group" types, but he turned the offer down on the grounds that he didn't want to be any part of a "Lord Sutch trip" - a jamming album which would make a lot of cash because of the big names, but which would undoubtedly have very limited musical quality.... and besides, he didn't want to hang around to discuss the proposition because he had a blind date with a chick with a 46 inch bust, and he was slobbering like a rabid dog.

I haven't heard the newly recorded Fowley solo album, but none of the others have ever been released here. Should you stumble across an import copy of any of these, do yourself a favour and leave it in the rack.... they are all, quite frankly, abominable horsemanure. His claim to fame is not as a singer, but as a song writer, scenemaker, admitted plunderer of the pop business, legendary producer, and as an unparalleled ballspinner and swaggerer. He's number one in a field of one.... there just couldn't be enough room in the world for two Kim Fowleys.

A great bloke.... you can't help liking him - and the production job and solid rock'n'roll authenticity on that Flash Cadillac album is just magnificent. Mac

ZZ: All right, let's start with 'Love Makes Sweet Music'....

KA: Yeah.... 'Drinking wine because you're scared to dream' is one of the lines in that.... 'But you know it'll get better if you let your dreams get wetter than wine.' We had to substitute 'better' for 'wetter' to please Polydor and our then manager, Mike Jeffreys. Long ago I must've decided, without realising what I was doing, that we weren't living at our maximum potential and that there were a great many more possibilities. At the same time I realised that to do it involves self-work rather than trying to change the world. And, apart from the occasional romantic deviation, most of my songs have been observations on that level. I've taken the role of someone who will keep prodding and sending out little alarm messages, as much for myself as anyone else. I have to keep singing the same song to myself.... one that says 'Come on, Kevin Ayers, you're still sleeping, still vegetating away! In effect, most of my songs have been about being asleep and wanting to wake up, and observations of people's behaviour through my own in the processes of sleeping.

ZZ: You've written some pretty straightforward philosophical things - like 'Rheinhardt and Geraldine/Colores Para Dolores' 'Shooting at the Moon', and 'Hymn', all of which actually list and anotate certain concepts.

KA: Very few of them are original thoughts mind you. I'm mainly a promoter and broadcaster of ideas I believe in. I bring them into my own framework of tunes and imagery, but the ideas are mainly things that I've read which have struck me as being reasonable.

ZZ: How did 'We Did It Again' and 'Why Are We Sleeping' come about?

KA: 'Did It Again' was another concept,

but much more of a participatory thing than an attempt to be the observer who coughs up the occasional sheaf of words about what everybody's doing, and who holds up the proverbial mirror to their actions. The idea I pinched from the Sufi thing of Dervish dances, the repetition of a straight rhythmic figure which promotes release from all the things that one finds difficulty in releasing normally. The only thing that I added to it was that I wanted people to rotate and fall down, as in the manner of Dervishes, by repeating this monotone phrase which had the right connotations. The time we did it in St. Tropez, with all of us going da-da-da-da for twenty minutes non-stop was the nearest I got to doing what I really wanted with that song. Since then it's become sort of orchestrated, we've split it up into bits and got away from the point really. I like repetition, if you only push it far enough it'll take you over and become the only thing that's important at that time. 'Why are we Sleeping' was my first reaction to reading Gurdjieff. It had such an incredible effect on me that I couldn't sleep at nights, I used to just sit up at nights just reading and thinking and taking all sorts of things to keep me awake and stimulated. It was even more devastating than my first joint - my first joint literally turned me upside down physically and left me in a daze from which I don't think I've recovered. But reading Gurdjieff involved a complete re-thinking of everything.

ZZ: How did the reference to Daevid Allen come into it?

KA: Well, Daevid had a poem which had in it the line 'my head is a nightclub', and I was very affected by him at the time. I was very young and impressionable when I met Daevid, and he had a strong effect on me because he was such a genuine freak, really dedicated to his profession of freaking; I've changed it now - I don't say 'and Daevid

was shouting' any more.... I find that all my most effective things have been reactions to other people or other intelligences, and that the greatest stimulation for me to produce something is change - the more drastic the change, usually the stronger the production.

ZZ: Have any of the songs you wrote with Daevid, apart from 'Yep' (flipside of Bridget St John's 'If you've got Money') seen the light of day?

KA: No, but he's got some old tapes. We worked on drones with funny lyrics.

ZZ: There always seems to be a strong distinction between the songs you've written in sunny climates and those conceived in sodden old Maida Vale.

KA: Yeah, there is some geographical distinction in it. For instance, I wrote 'Clarence in Wonderland' in St. Tropez. That song has about four verses in fact, but because I've had to sing it so much and got choked off with it, I've tried everything possible to shorten it and not to go through the whole saga. I used to enjoy it very much. The first verse, you know 'I had a dream and I know you'll all understand', was an attempt to communicate my early LSD visions - it was still a sacred thing in those days - and the rest of it was just a fantasy evolving out of that.

ZZ: It sounds like a bit of a bad trip, really, what with eyes popping and jumping and not being able to see yourself and all that....?

KA: It's a pretty relaxed one though, it's not supposed to indicate any panic.

ZZ: What other Mediterranean orientated songs come to mind?

KA: Well, there was a bossa nova on 'Shooting at the Moon', called 'Red, Green and You Blue.' I've always been bad at

writing love songs because I'm constantly irritated by the simplicity of what love boils down to in terms of words. It ends up so prosaic unless you fantasise, elaborate or camouflage to a ridiculous extent.

ZZ: But you put out 'Margaret' which is a very simplistic song....

KA: Yes, I was amazed when I did that - must be one of the very few that've slipped through.

ZZ: With 'Joy of a Toy', 'Did it Again' 'Joy of a Toy Continued', 'There is Loving' 'Lullabye' and to a certain extent 'Decadence', you're working on a level of pure tune-making with comparatively little lyric content. Is that a particularly fruitful area as far as you're concerned?

KA: Yes it is, but I think people like words as well. Unless you're sufficiently competent to know and understand music as a language so well as to manipulate it and still be able to create something - which is quite rare - it has to be an instinctive creation. You tend to miscommunicate with the music quite easily, at least I find that, although I'm not even sure I want to be a communicator. Sometimes I just want to make tunes because they sound good. Actually, in the few lyrics there are on 'There is Loving' I thought I said something fairly devastating, which was 'Every-thing you do is true as long as you believe it'. Nobody else seemed to think so.

ZZ: That bit was also the beginning of 'Butterfly Dance' wasn't it?

KA: Yeah, I'm always patching up bits and pieces. I find myself writing songs where the bridge is good and the rest rather boring. So I say, I won't throw away that bridge, I'll use it for something else. Then I wait until I happen to write another song in that key, and because it's one person all the way through there's a certain

continuity; I've done that with 'Shouting in a Bucket Blues' - the bridge is off a totally different song and yet they fit together.

ZZ: What's the hidden metaphor in 'Stop This Train'?

KA: It's the sleeping thing again. The idea of a railway was probably pinched from Gurdjieff as well, being that you can get off the train if you want to but you've got to make the effort, nobody will help you, they can only guide you. The last lines are 'I stepped outside/it nearly blinded me/ I'd never seen such a light before', and that's about as far as I got, it's still blinding. I've been singing the same song ever since.

ZZ: You sent IT some letters once, which they printed....

KA: Yes, I sent them a few lyrics including 'Song for Insane Times', another one I thought was going to be lauded for its scathing attack, but people just muttered 'nice one' and that was it.... it's got some of my best lyrics as far as I'm concerned.

ZZ: I know the people who populate it quite well - the Walrus singers, Alice, the lifeguard....

KA: There were a few crafty digs in it, more crafty than arty, like 'Alice is wearing her sexiest gown but she doesn't want you to look at her'.... that situation must've been happening since men and women were invented.

ZZ: How do you equate regarding yourself as a minstrel with very rarely, if ever, having done a solo gig, and also releasing anything-but-minstrelsy records?

KA: Well, I equate it with my own desire for musical interest, in that I find that just one person with a guitar, however

good he might be, doesn't really interest me; I'd much rather hear other instruments as well.

ZZ: So what particular part of you do you regard as the minstrel?

KA: The part that's died a lot recently. I no longer have the opportunities to sing at parties with a guitar - I don't seem to get in those situations anymore. And England isn't really conducive to that kind of thing. I suppose if I went back down to Spain, it wouldn't be long before I was singing in cafes again.

ZZ: Why don't you capture more of your appetite for Music Hall, Farce and Absurdism on record?

KA: I like those things at the time they're still funny to me, but when I hear the recorded result, I immediately want to phase them off, which is what I've done with a number of songs which were going to be on the new album. I prefer to put on record things that have a more lasting musical value, and things that you can listen to again and hear something different, rather than getting the whole picture straight off.

ZZ: But do you not envisage ever doing a live LP of some of your best-received ridiculous songs?

KA: Not really. I enjoy them on gigs.... I keep slipping 'Hat Song' into 'Why are we sleeping' because I'm very conscious when things are going heavily, although it's evident that the most successful groups never drop their image and drive the whole thing home, ending up on a dramatic note that leaves people wanting more. It's dangerous in a way, to laugh at yourself in public, though it isn't for me, because the people who come to my gigs expect that now - so I'll probably change to something else.

ZZ: Is 'Stranger' in blue suede shoes',

STAMP COLLECTING IN SIDCUP

.....IN WHICH KEVIN AYERS
TALKS ABOUT HIS SONGS
AND WE TRACE HIS
[AND HIS MATES']
FAMILY TREE

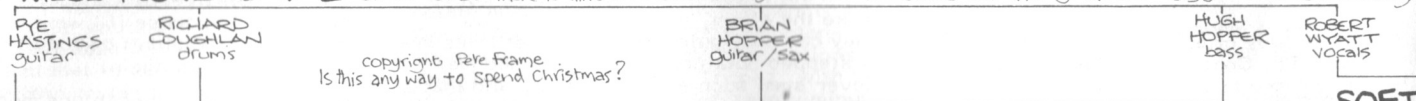


Kevin Ayers: "Whenever you're beginning to get too serious, throw in a banana" (Time Out).

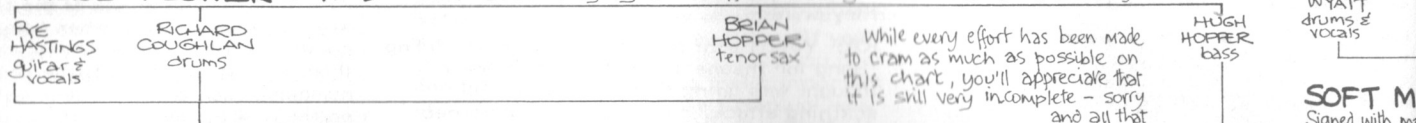
WILDE FLOWERS #1 circa 1964. Legendary Canterbury area group playing a mixture of John Coltrane, Duane Eddy & James Brown?

RICHARD SINCLAIR rhythm guitar → went to college & later returned to music in Caravan.

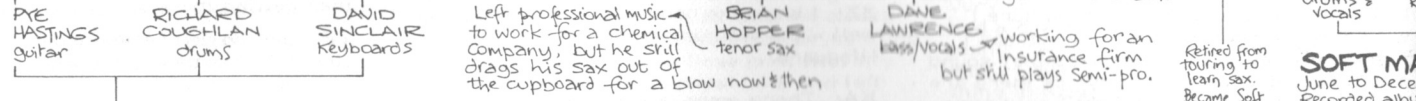
WILDE FLOWERS #2 circa 1965. There is little or no documentary evidence to indicate that this group ever gigged outside Canterbury.



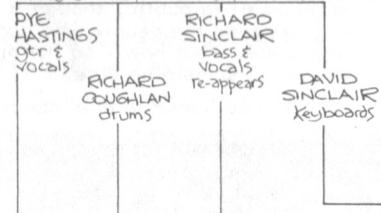
WILDE FLOWERS #3 circa 1966. Playing own stuff but mostly soul music as dictated by audiences.



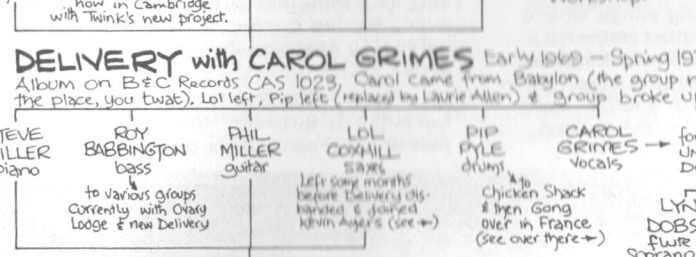
WILDE FLOWERS #4 Approx Jan 1967 until June 1967 when they broke up and spent six months sorting out exactly what kind of music they wanted to play - after which they re-emerged as Caravan.



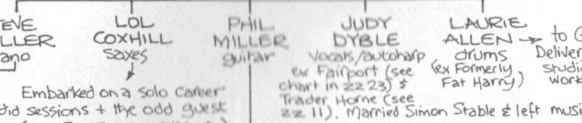
CARAVAN #1 Jan 1968 to July 1971. Much vaunted group growing from tattered remains of Wilde Flowers. Three albums: 'CARAVAN' Verve 6011 (Oct 68), (Reissued 6/72 on MGM 2353/058), 'IF I COULD DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN' (Sept 70) Decca SKL 5052, 'IN THE LAND OF GREY & PINK' (Apr 71) Decca SDL 1.



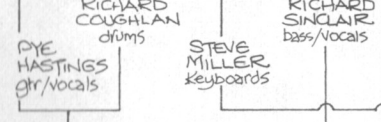
DELIVERY #1 1968 to early 1969 (Everybody seems very hazy about the exact dates). Started as a very blues based group but gradually opened out - especially at legendary gigs down in that vile PIP hole known as the Aylesbury Arts Workshop.



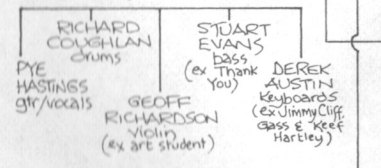
DC & the MBs Short lived group - Summer 1971. (Dyble, Coxhill & the Miller Brothers). Judy Dyble was unable to extricate herself from wicked previous contracts.



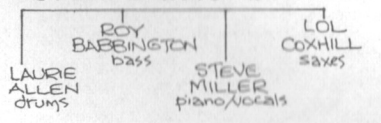
CARAVAN #2 7-71 - 7-72. Album: 'WATERLOO LILY' (May 72) SDL 8.



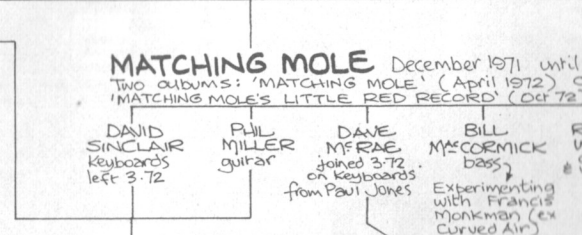
CARAVAN #3 July 72 to now. New album out soon.



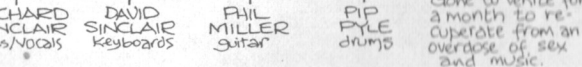
THE NEW DELIVERY Formed December 1972 but not yet intended to be a full time band due to members' other interests. Lol & Steve have album out soon on Revelation.



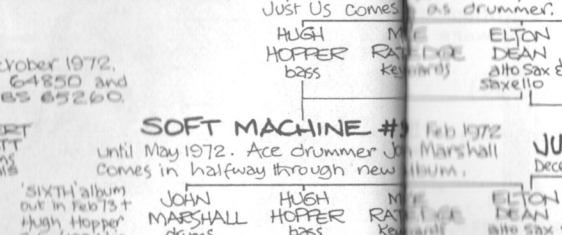
QUET SUN 1969-71. Far too musical/unsensational ever to be commercial success. Was half of THE COXHILL/BEDFORD DUO (with David Bedford) and the COXHILL/MILLER DUO (with Steve Miller). Currently working with both the above & DELIVERY.



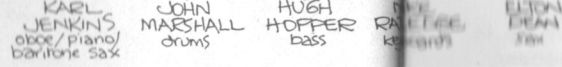
HATFIELD & the NORTH October 72 - now. Nice band which grew out of Steve Miller's front room. Currently seducing various record labels.



SOFT MACHINE #7 Feb 70 to Sept 1971. Albums: Robert Wyatt solo 'END OF AN ERA' (Oct 70) CBS 64189, The Soft Machine 'FOURTH' (February 1971) on CBS 64280. During his Whole World days Kevin Ayers did the occasional gig with fellow Blackhill artists, Bridget St John & produced and played on her single: 'IF YOU'VE GOT THE MONEY'/'YEP' WB 8019. Other Ayers singles: 'Eleanors Cake'/'Singing a Song in the morning'/'Butterfly Dance'/'Pis je'/'Stranger in blue suede shoes'/'Stars'/'on not a dream'/'come on a rubber band'. All Harvest.

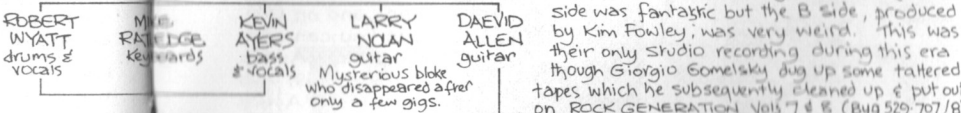


SOFT MACHINE #10 June 1972 - now. Album: 'FIFTH' (June 1972) CBS 64189.

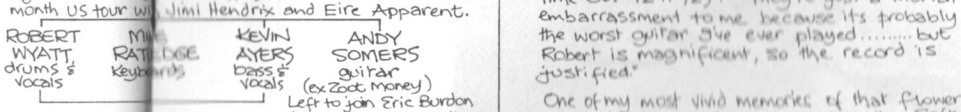


Kevin: (on going to Canterbury and meeting the Robert Wyatt gang). "They were very weird compared to every one else - and well into jazz. Things mainly centred around Robert's house in those days, because that was where the music and drugs and sex were all happening. I wasn't at all interested in music at the time... it must be the Japanese in me that tries to emulate the people I like, and in this case, I ended up joining them." The Soft Machine evolved in England (UFO & nascent underground scene) using Majorca as a recreational playground, but most ecstatic audiences were French.

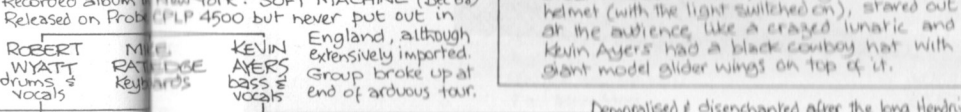
SOFT MACHINE #1 Early 1967 - early 1968 (except Nolan). Recorded amazing single 'LOVE MAKES SWEET MUSIC'/'FEELIN' REELIN' SQUEELIN' Polydor 56151 (The A side was fantastic but the B side, produced by Kim Fowley, was very weird. This was their only studio recording during this era though Giorgio Gomelsky dug up some tailored tapes which he subsequently cleaned up & put out on ROCK GENERATION Vols 7 & 8 (Byg 529 707/8). The Soft Machine are on one side of each.)



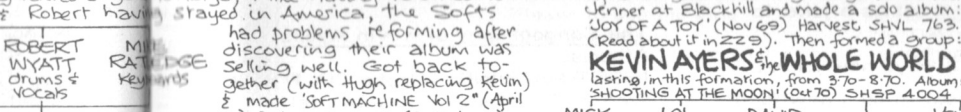
SOFT MACHINE #2 March 1968 - Jun 1968. Signed with manager Mike Jeffreys and embarked on six month US tour with Jimi Hendrix and Eire Apparent.



SOFT MACHINE #3 June to December 1968. Recorded album in New York: 'SOFT MACHINE' (Dec 68) Released on Prob CP 4500 but never put out in England, although extensively imported. Group broke up at end of arduous tour.



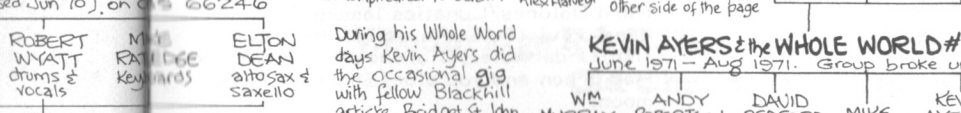
SOFT MACHINE #4 February to October 1969. Kevin having retired & gone to Ibiza, Mike having returned to England, & Robert having stayed in America, the Softs had problems re-forming after discovering their album was selling well. Got back together (with Hugh replacing Kevin) & made 'SOFT MACHINE Vol 2' (April 69) Probe SPB 1002. (EMI here).



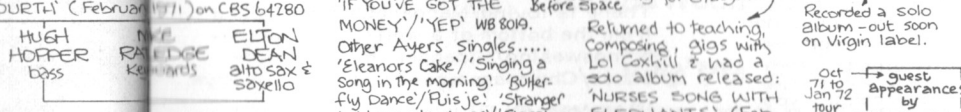
SOFT MACHINE #5 October - December 1969. Line-up greatly expanded for just one experimental tour.



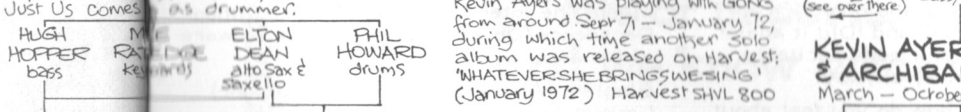
SOFT MACHINE #6 Dec 69 - Feb 70. Wind section pruned by 50%. They record new album: 'THIRD' (released Jun 70) on CBS 66246.



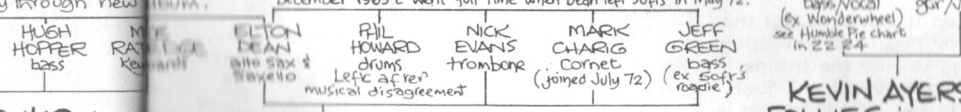
SOFT MACHINE #7 Feb 70 to Sept 1971. Albums: Robert Wyatt solo 'END OF AN ERA' (Oct 70) CBS 64189, The Soft Machine 'FOURTH' (February 1971) on CBS 64280.



SOFT MACHINE #8 Sept 1971 - Jan 1972. Phil from Just Us comes as drummer.



SOFT MACHINE #9 Feb 1972. Solo 'ELTON DEAN' album CBS 64539 (Aug 71). Started as a part time group in December 1969 & went full time when Dean left Softs in May 72.



SOFT MACHINE #10 June 1972 - now. Album: 'FIFTH' (June 1972) CBS 64189.



THE INCESTUOUS TALES OF CANTERBURY HEADS and sundry country cousins, urban 'erberts, and Australian nomads. Research by A. Clark/Pete Frame. Drawn by Pete Frame.

David Allen, an Australian by birth if not by inclination, left Melbourne in 1960, never to return. During the early sixties, he was playing Ornette Coleman inspired free jazz with Messrs Wyatt, Hopper & Ratledge, but he gravitated from Kent to Paris where he became involved with the poetry/writing/beat/Burroughs/Corsco scene and also met Gilli Smyth, who was similarly interested in poetry readings.

1966 found our man taking it easy in Majorca, where, simultaneously, arrived Kevin Ayers, interested in skating a group and a freaked-out spectacle manufacturer/cowboy from Tulsa, Oklahoma, who ended up giving them enough bread to set up. "He'd shoot his guns in the air & things like that - a real madman - and the Spanish police finally chased him up the mountains. He later took too much acid & totally freaked out on a Jesus trip." Anyway, David and Kevin returned to Canterbury, pissed Robert from the Wilde Flowers, and Mike from Oxford, and started the Soft Machine.

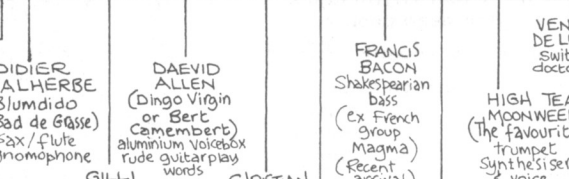
After an historic gig outside St Tropez, playing the warm-up set before the presentation of the Picasso play 'Le Desir Athrèpe' par la Queue. Allen was allegedly refused re-entry into England and his association with the Soft Machine came to an abrupt end. Besides visa trouble, however, "everyone in the group was on an ego trip; we were all gunning for each other - it was like jungle warfare... and it always was until I left".

Allen returned to Paris to set up "situations where as many people as possible can play & be together." His first group, GONGS #1, playing in a small Paris club, was a large number of musicians and singers improvising around nothing for hours on end, completely stoned. A series of Gongs played their "total space music" (a bootleg of which is in existence - send us a copy, somebody please) until the Paris student revolution, after which 2 members of the then current Gong were busted and David & Gilli were temporarily chased out of Paris by "the Gestapo".

Signed with Byg Records in Paris, owned by Karakos (who is "the Castro of the recording industry" to Allen), and made 'MAGICK BROTHER/MYSTIC SISTER' (1970) (Byg Acheul series) during the recording of which he met most of the current GONGS. Next album 'BANANA MOON' (1971) Byg 529.345 (with a host of mates on it too), followed by 'CONTINENTAL CIRCUS' (the soundtrack of a documentary on racing star Jack Finlay) on Phillips (France). Then came 'CAMEMBERT ELECTRIQUE' (allegedly recorded during the full moon of June July & Sept 71) released on Byg 529.353 in France and probably to be released here soon on new Virgin Records label. Also, one side of the 'GLASTONBURY FAYRE' triple album (Revelation label) features Gong.

Hopefully, his appearance on Virgin Records will bring David Allen's amazing music to a wider audience; with the right people dropping his name and assembling the necessary and appropriate charismatic image, he could become the Beefheartian cult figure of 1973. Anyway, all this leads to

GONG #27 1970 - now (changing all the time). See above for details of albums. Toured England during Winter 71/2 and are currently here again, recording a new album (for release on Virgin label) at The Manor.

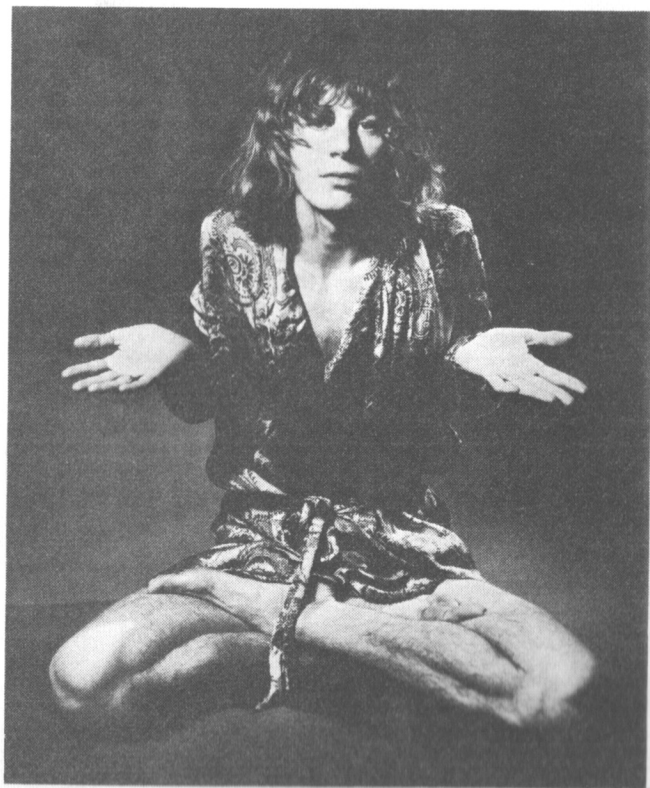


Seemingly hundreds of assorted drummers: RACHID HOUARI replaced in April 1971 by PIP PYLE who returned to Hatfield & the North via the Paul Jones group & new Delivery in December 1971. Next was LAURIE ALLEN ex Bottered Ornaments, Piblockp, Formerly Fat Harry & a host of others. Then came MAC POOLE who fled to sanity of England & was succeeded by CHARLES HAYWARD ex Quet Sun. Then ROB TAIT & DAI BOND, & now the return of the dynamic duo of LAURIE ALLEN & RACHID HOUARI. (How long this time?)

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Photographs of Kevin Ayers are almost as rare as those of Howard Hughes... at least, you'd think they were by the panic caused at Blackhill Enterprises when I enquired if they had any. Never mind - they came up with some in the end: two pages back you can see Kevin and Archie Legget during their Banana Follies frolics last year, and on this page you can see Padmasana Ayers (vintage 1969) and Knuckles O'Ayers (vintage 1971).

as was suggested, a kind of indirect tribute to Lou Reed?

KA: No, that one has nothing to do with Lou Reed. If anything, 'Decadence' on the new lp relates to the original Velvet Underground. Quite a lot of it is about Nico, and it's even got places like 'Desert Shore' in it. I think with this new album I've tried to be a little less personal in my fantasies and tried to make the imagery more accessible. It's worked to a certain extent and I'll be interested to see whether more people want to listen to it.

ZZ: How do you feel about your other albums?

KA: None of my records ever turn out as more than demos, because I can always see different ways of doing things. Once I've written a song and recorded it more or less how I want it, then I lose interest in it totally. I don't feel anything about my albums... they're dead people.

ZZ: Not even as an observer?

KA: If I were strong enough to see them from the outside, I'd be quite amused by some of them, and I might like some of the musical content... that's about as much as anyone could say.

ZZ: Did you bring Archie Legget back from France after you left Gong?

KA: No, Archie had worked with Daevid and was staying at the flat here... we just played a bit together and decided to keep going.

ZZ: What concrete changes do you feel he's caused in your music?

KA: Well, not him individually, but he and Eddie Sparrow - because they've worked together in a context that I have not worked in - have made it more... um... funky, I suppose. They have certain very set ideas of how rhythms should be and, having agreed, I've fallen in with them.

ZZ: Have you dropped any of your songs at their insistence?

KA: Not at their insistence, but as a result of their presence. Like Archie

doesn't enjoy doing things like 'Oh My! anymore -- which is a feeling I share... things like that are great as a joke to start with...

ZZ: But there are always new jokes.

KA: Right. It's great to do a new joke for a while but not to keep it in. The things which are worth doing are those which have mathematical structure in terms of rhythm and harmony - things that work, and everybody knows when they work. There's a certain inescapable truth about it.

ZZ: Every writer and singer seems to have a few songs from his past, hits or otherwise, which he just keeps doing... but you don't. Do you regard yourself as a man with no evergreens?

KA: As I said, once a song is created and produced, and I've heard it back... that's it. The only validity in doing it again is in the actual functioning of the rhythms while playing it... I don't feel sentimental about any of my songs, nor do I think that any one is more or less representative than any other.

ZZ: But when you go to France, you resurrect certain songs then, don't you?

KA: Yes; there's 'Puis Je', which is a fairly diplomatic nod in the direction of audience participation, and 'Did it again' because the French are more excitable... so it seems to me, anyway.

ZZ: In retrospect, how do you feel about the Banana Follies show you did in London?

KA: It was good when it worked, but the trouble is that I never really believe that anybody else is going to like the things that I do, and I can't get over it. I just don't have the conviction. When we do it again, I'm going to be more involved in the ideas side of it rather than the actual performing... the next Banana Follies will be more planned.

ZZ: Having built up a rather obscure kind of popularity over the last 3 years, are you worried about becoming a professional eccentric?

KA: I already am one, and I can't say that I'm all that worried. Al Clark

The Songography of Kevin Ayers

Albums:
'SOFT MACHINE' (Probe CPLP 4500)
Wrote: Joy of a toy/Lullabye letter/We did it again/Why are we sleeping?

'JOY OF A TOY' (Harvest SHVL 763)
Joy of a toy continued/Town feeling/The Clarietta rag/Girl on a swing/Song for insane times/Stop this train/Eleanor's cake/The lady Rachel/Oleh oleh Bandu Bandong/All this crazy gift of time.

'SHOOTING AT THE MOON' (SHSP 4005)
May I/Rheinhardt & Geraldine/Colores Para Dolores/Lunatics lament/Pisser dans un violin/The oyster & the flying fish/Underwater/Clarence in wonderland/Red green and you blue/Shooting at the moon.

'WHATEVER SHE BRINGS WESING' (Harvest SHVL 800)
There is loving/Margaret/Oh my/ Song from the bottom of a well/Whatever she brings wesing/Stranger in blue suede shoes/Champagne cowboy blues/Lullabye.

'BANANAMOUR' (Harvest SHVL 807)
Don't let it get you down/Shouting in a bucket blues/When your parents go to sleep/The interview/International anthem/Decadence/Oh wot a dream/Hymn/Beware of the dog.

Singles: (All Harvest except * Polydor)
Love makes sweet music.*
Singing a song in the morning (accompanied by Caravan)/Eleanor's cake.
Butterfly Dance/Puis je.
Yep (b-side of Bridget St John single)...
...Kevin produced and added vocal/bass.
Stranger in blue suede shoes/Stars.
Oh wot a dream/Connie on a rubber band (The latter being a reggae version of 'Clarence in Wonderland')

Other favourites not on record:
Fake Mexican tourist blues/Take me to Tahiti/Don't sing no more sad songs/
'Orrible orange/Hat song/Falling in love again/Queen thing.

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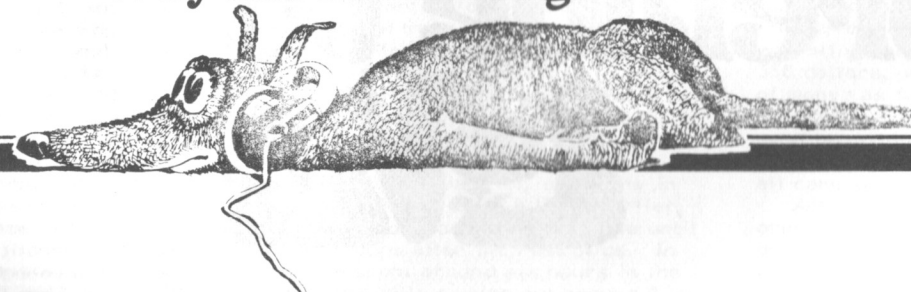
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The sinister Arthurly

prelude to LOVE

While chatting to Jerry Hopkins, Rolling Stone's man in London, at a press reception, I found that he was involved in the early career of Love. He agreed to let me point a microphone at him and drag out his recollections of the period; they came out rather like this:

"My involvement with Love began back in 1965 - probably the summer of that year. At the time, I was working for an ABC-TV show called 'Shiverree', which was a syndicated half-hour low budget 'Son of Shindig!' type of thing - in fact, that's what it was known as on the lot. I was associate producer, booking the acts for the show, and part of my job was to keep an eye on everything that was happening in town (Los Angeles), checking out new groups and that sort of thing.

During the course of my wanderings, I happened to notice a sign in front of the Ivar Theatre on Ivar Street in Hollywood. The theatre was a small legitimate theatre for productions of small local and elsewhere established plays, and behind it was this small night club - just a bar with a stage, really, and a tiny dance floor. Anyway, the sign in front of the theatre pointed down an alleyway to the side and announced that a group called The Grass Roots was currently playing at the bar. (They might possibly have been calling themselves the Original Grass Roots by this time because another group had ripped off their name). I went down to take a look at them but I can't really remember anything too specific about that first hearing, except that I must've been impressed or at least intrigued, because I went back to see them again and again. Like so many people during that period, I was smitten by pop fever and for some bizarre reason I had this idea in my head that I wanted to get into management. I had a partner at the time, Doug Lyon, who is still in the management business as far as I'm aware and makes a lot of money running a bunch of groups that no-one has heard of, back and forth between Reno and Vegas, and I took him down to this bar/night club where we talked to the group. The line-up then was Arthur Lee (guitar/vocals/harmonica), Kenny Forssi (bass), Johnny Echols (lead guitar), Bryan Maclean (guitar/vocals), and Don Conka (drums), and the name of the club was Bido Lito's, although I'd known of its existence in a previous incarnation. During the folkie boom it had been known as Cosmo Alley, because the rear door opened onto Cosmo Lane, and that was the entrance everybody seemed to use, but when the folk scene began to die off it re-emerged as Bido Lito's. The reason for that name remains a mystery as far as I'm concerned because it was owned by a middle aged couple called Thomson, who were both very affable and couldn't have been in it for the money for the simple reason that I'm certain they never made a penny out of the place. Mrs Thomson, I'll always remember, danced like a maniac all the time; she must have been put together with silly putty - she'd go out there and shake her rather misshapen behind in a vaguely erotic but mostly pretty funny way.

The club was pretty small; on entering from the Cosmo Lane direction, you went through a small courtyard and entered by a jukebox, with the bar straight ahead of you. As you made a sort of U-turn there was this small dance floor with a few odd tables and chairs around it, and at the far end, a little stage. And there, Love played pretty much nightly.

If everybody in the group showed up, and there were times when each of them would fail to appear (it wasn't just Conka who was erratic in arriving), and if there was a big enough audience to warrant it, they would get 5 dollars each. If there

were only a few people in the club, as was often the case during the week, then Mr Thomson would announce that there would be no band that evening and that the patrons could either go home or listen to the jukebox.

Over the weeks, however, Bido Lito's developed a reputation, partly because of Love, as an "in" club and became very popular, though they never enlarged the premises or moved to a larger place. It became one of the true underground clubs in LA, and Love was one of the two underground groups there, the only other in the city being the Byrds. An interesting sort of alliance existed between these groups, mainly because Bryan Maclean was one of the original Byrds' roadies, and 'Hey Joe' was a tune they both did. At that time, Love had two "signature tunes"; one was 'My little red book', which Manfred Mann had done in the night club scene of the film 'Whats new Pussycat?' but which was speeded up and thereby improved by Love, and the other was 'Hey Joe'. . . . and it seemed that whenever I entered the club they were playing one or other of these, although their repertoire was, of course, somewhat broader than that. 'Hey Joe' was a song the Byrds had been doing up on Sunset Strip, about a mile or a mile and a half away, in a club called Ciro's, which at one point of time had been one of those establishment Hollywood type places where Clark Gable and people like that hung out. When Bryan joined Love, he brought with him several Byrds' songs, not yet recorded, including 'Hey Joe' which they did practically note for note.

Eventually, of course, another group from Los Angeles, the Leaves, had a hit with 'Hey Joe'. From what I can gather, a couple of guys from the Leaves heard Love doing 'Hey Joe' at Bido Lito's, were impressed, and asked Bryan, who was the singer on that one, for the lyrics. Bryan, being the surly/moody type, refused but Arthur, with somewhat uncharacteristic benevolence, said "oh, go on. . . . give 'em the words". So Bryan laboriously wrote them out, but refused to tell them who had written the song. The Leaves subsequently released the song as a single (on Mira) and authorship was noted as 'traditional/public domain', but it bombed and they went back into the studio and re-recorded it. The re-release, which was a big hit, had the correct writer's credit - Chet Powers, as Dino Valente was known then. (The Leaves' hit is featured on the magnificent Elektra album 'Nuggets').

Anyway, on to my personal hard luck story with Love. We decided we wanted to manage them, Doug and I. We thought they had a lot of potential and were unaware of their reputation as 'a difficult group'; we picked that up not long after from various people including, ironically, one of the record company executives we took down to see them. We talked to them about management, but we were just as new to the business as they were. . . . we talked, we hung out, we went down to Bido Lito's night after night - 4 or 5 nights a week, I guess, and we always paid to get in too, not that it cost all that much.

Eventually, after they'd held various meetings, Arthur came to us and said they'd talked it over and decided that they wanted us to manage them, so we sat down and held big policy discussions. Arthur said he wanted three things before he would consider signing a record contract; one - it had to be a big company, because he figured a small company wouldn't have the amount of money he wanted behind him to promote Love. Two - he wanted Love to have a billboard on Sunset Strip. "Oh come on, Arthur!" we said, "you know that is out of the question" because, at that time, it was outrageous - nobody had ever

heard of such a thing. In fact, it turned out that the Doors were the first group to have a billboard on the Strip, a year later. . . . the record industry has never forgiven Jac Holzman for that. The final stipulation was that he would not be required to play any club on Sunset Strip, where it was all happening baby, unless he had top billing over any other groups. You see, he was totally convinced he was going to be as big as Jagger. I don't remember him ever wearing a wig, though I heard a lot of wig stories both before and after - like when he first saw Jimi Hendrix, he went out and bought a fright wig. At the time I was involved with Love he was wearing a combat boot on one foot and only a sock on the other, and he'd stand out there playing a double-necked guitar that he used to have.

In time, he must have relaxed these requirements because Love signed with Elektra, then a very small company, they didn't get their billboard (until a long time later), and they played The Trip on Sunset Strip second billed to the Turtles. I think he wisely settled for less than he wanted.

Our first priority as managers, was to get a record contract, without which, we realised, it was impossible to get very far. We could've got them other gigs but they probably wouldn't have paid any better than the secure one they had at Bido Lito's and besides, it was 1965 and Beatlemania had gripped America; an awful lot of good groups were looking for work and Love, though very good as far as we were concerned, were still pretty rough and, even worse, were extremely unreliable. . . . so we stuck with the regular Bido Lito's gig.

Because of my job at ABC, dealing with record companies, it was fairly easy to get representatives down to the club to see them. . . . I managed to get several people down there, but off-hand, I can only remember two of them. One was Artie Kornfeld, who had been in a duo and had a minor hit with 'Pied Piper', and who was now getting into production, though I can't remember which label he was with. . . . he was later one of the producers of the Woodstock Festival. The other guy who came to see Love was David Anderle, who was then with MGM. I subsequently found out that he had been with Twentieth Century Fox and had discovered Love at the Brave New World, the coffee house in which they'd started out as the Grass Roots. He'd been round and round with them, trying to get them to sign with 20th Century Fox, but in the end he'd given up - so when I called him, he said "oh my God, you haven't discovered them too?"

The troubles started almost immediately; every time a record company executive came down, someone in the band wouldn't show up - even though we took great pains to explain the importance of their all being there. We were getting nowhere fast; all we were doing was running out of record companies who were getting fed up having their time wasted by unknown groups who didn't even turn up to play. . . . it was just a waste of time for everybody concerned.

Finally we arrived at what we thought was the solution; we'd take them into a studio, record them ourselves, and try to get a company interested through the tape. So we booked some time at Original Sound, a small 4 track studio on Sunset which was owned by a fellow whose main concern was putting out 'Golden Oldies' compilation albums. It was a fairly brisk rainy day when we went in, sometime in late Autumn 1965 or even a little earlier, but anyway, Don Conka didn't arrive until about two hours after the rest of us. In the end we spent around six hours in the studio, eventually coming out around 3 in



the morning with some 5 songs down. Now, seven years later, I can't remember all the titles, but I know the two "signature tunes" were among them, but we weren't very happy with the results - none of us; it was a painful session for all concerned.

Neither Doug nor I understood any of the technicalities of recording, so we were of little use - in fact, I don't even think we were much use at providing moral support. The group had no knowledge of studios either, so we were all feeling our way in the dark, aided by an engineer who was tired and wanted to get to bed. The tape we came away with was, to put it nicely, embarrassing but nevertheless it was all we had and it represented around 350 dollars, which was an enormous lot of money as far as we were concerned. Doug took it round the companies and they must be congratulated for not hating him for wasting their time. . . . so nothing at all came of that tape.

After that, our relationship with the group fell apart fairly quickly. They had decided to change their name to Love and we argued against it on the grounds that it was pretentious and self-conscious. In

view of their unreliability and general hard-to-get-along-with attitudes, and as there were 5 of them, I suggested they call themselves Fist, but they didn't think that was at all amusing.

One day, Arthur came to us and told us that Love had a manager and that it wasn't us. It turned out to be a fellow called Herb Cohen, who had been medium size big as a manager in the folk boom, and he still handled a lot of old folkies who were turning to rock - like MFQ for instance. I'll be generous and say that he did not have a good reputation in the business, though he seems to have moved on to bigger and more lucrative projects, like Zappa. We told Arthur we were sad to hear that - not just because we'd been aced out, but because we didn't feel that Herb Cohen was the best choice he could have made. We had no contracts with Love; we'd agreed to work on the basis that if we did the group some good, we'd expect them to sign the relevant papers, so there was nothing to prevent them from signing with Cohen, which they did.

Some time later, Arthur was on the phone asking us to help him get away from Cohen. I told him there were laws which prevented this, but he asked if we'd meet him and we agreed to. When he arrived, he reckoned he had it all figured out, and producing his birth certificate declared that he was under 21 when he signed with Herb Cohen, thereby making any contract null and void. I still have his birth certificate in my files at home somewhere - it showed that he was indeed a minor and also that he was the son of a Memphis plasterer - for what little that trivia's worth... he and Johnny Echols went to high school together, Kenny had been in the Surfaris (see Snoopy in Love, if you have a copy), Bryan was a roadie, and I don't know where Don Conka came from or indeed anything about him at all, except that he disappeared and became a song, 'Signed DC'.

We sat around for a while, hoping that something would happen and that we'd be able to get them back, but finally we gave up and told Arthur we didn't fancy getting involved in lawsuits with Herb, who was the first person who'd have sued us, I'm sure. I asked Arthur if he had a lawyer, he said no and could I recommend one, so I gave him the names of two showbiz type attorneys, patted him on the behind, and that was the last we saw of him. I've run into him now and then over the years, and we always laugh at each other in a friendly way, but that was the end of my involvement with him and Love".

Jerry having poured forth all this information, I proceeded to dig deeper and try to find out more, questioning the validity of some of the more dubious things we have printed about Love in the past.

ZZ: Did you ever see Arthur play drums?

JH: Yes. I wouldn't doubt that he played them on '7 and 7 is', as has been written. He could play any instrument he got near... passably. During the course of a standard Love set, including an interminable version of Smokestack Lightning, which was actually pretty amazing (later to turn into 'Revelation'), he would at some point move to the drums. When Don Conka didn't turn up, they would often enquire of the audience whether there was a drummer in the house, and if, by chance, there was, they'd pull him out and play on. I never met Snoopy, but Arthur could certainly play drums as well as Don Conka.

ZZ: Were they into drugs as early as 65?

JH: I don't know... but these were days before it was fashionable to be stoned out of your mind. I do remember that we said

something like "in order to make it, if any of you have any drug hang-ups, you'd better think about getting over them" but I can't really say more than that, because I don't know more than that.

ZZ: Did Arthur have this impressive big house we hear about?

JH: No, they were all living in pretty scruffy, whatever they could find, sort of conditions though Bryan was living in a flat over Vito's place in Hollywood. It's true that Arthur now has a very fancy home out in one of the nicer canyons in Los Angeles - I haven't seen it, but I know the street it's on, and there aren't any shacks there.

ZZ: They are reputed to have got together in the Brave New World in April 65 - is that about right?

JH: Yes, I think so. The Brave New World later moved to a new location in Hollywood and Love played there a few times to help it get off the ground.

ZZ: What did you think of the records?

JH: My personal involvement with them had ceased before they made any, of course, but my musical involvement - in terms of listening to their stuff and really digging it a lot, to the extent that their music became a part of my life - slowed to a crawl after 'Forever Changes'.... but then, the Beatles never made another 'Sgt Pepper', did they?

ZZ: Why, do you imagine, were Love never big in the States - because their legend in England is just unbelievably huge.

JH: I can only guess, but the fact that they hardly ever played outside LA was the major thing... they didn't do any TV appearances or any promotional tours. Snoopy indicates that this may have been because of drug problems, and that alone could have been sufficient deterrent, because you've got to be together to go out on a heavy schedule tour. I'm sure that Elektra would've provided backing for a promotional tour because Holzman was not only very anxious to get into rock, but he really believed in Love, especially Arthur. Holzman's a good judge of talent and he saw Arthur for what he was.

ZZ: But Arthur, by all accounts, was very difficult to control.

JH: He was difficult, hard to please and he'd change his mind a lot. In later years he changed Love's personnel too much, I felt... maybe his head was too big. He certainly had a huge ego, which is alright if you can channel it properly, but I don't think Arthur ever had the necessary self discipline.

ZZ: Do you know any of the later guys?

JH: Only Nooney Rickett, who was sort of a half member; he'd been one of many local aspiring superstars, playing clubs in LA - especially PJs, which spawned Trini Lopez and Johnny Rivers among others. As it happened, Arthur merely took over Nooney's band and it became Love in one of its later incarnations.

ZZ: They never seemed to assemble an image in America, did they?

JH: Not at the time, no... nothing that clicked with the audience anyway. In retrospect it is apparent that Arthur was so on top of things - Love, in a bizarre way, was really a perfect name for them, but I didn't have the foresight to see it. There are lots of little things I can think of now - like Arthur had the first pair of psychedelic glasses I ever saw. In 1967, summer-of-love and all that, every kid with a dollar in his pocket was walking

around with chandelier crystal glasses, seeing about 16 images - but Arthur had a pair in 65, which was really far out. To complicate matters further, one lens was blue and the other red - God only knows how he walked in them, but he was always wearing them (see first album). - I hear that he used to drive in them too! Bryan Maclean used to wear a cape, but I suspect he got that idea off David Crosby. When it was decided that we manage them, that night I gave Bryan a lift home and I remember him turning to me and saying "Now you're managing us, does that mean we'll have to get our hair cut?" I thought that was lovely, but you must remember that in LA in 1965, long hair was still something to worry about socially.

ZZ: What do you think about Jac Holzman saying that '7 and 7 is' took 60 takes?

JH: That's phenomenal. We took them into the studio and cut a tape which, through nobody's fault, was absolutely terrible... when their first album came out, I just fell on the floor - I couldn't believe it was the same band. It was then that I realised the importance of someone who knows how to work in a studio, to advise and direct the group and to get the best out of them... it was obviously that, wasn't it? Even on the crappy tape which we made, it was take after take until poor Arthur was hoarse and crawling to the control room for a little encouragement before he went back and had another try.

ZZ: Can you tell us something about this guy Vito who seems to crop up a lot in the history of both the Byrds and Love?

JH: Yes. His name is Vitorius Alphonsus Paulakus - I think he's Polish. He was a seaman one time, but settled in LA, and I knew him long before I ran into Love. In 1962, when I first knew him, he was running and teaching in a sculpture and free dance school, and to my knowledge he still is. He and his wife Sue, who was about a third of his age, had a store in one of the seedier ends of Hollywood, where they sold dresses which Sue made; they lived above that, and had studios in the basement. He was a short, wiry guy and one of the original LA freaks - a craggy faced dude who was very much on the scene... loved to dance, loved to have a good time, loved to throw or sponsor dances and was a scenemaker in the true underground sense - he wasn't looking to make a name for himself. He was a genuine lovely far out freak who may have done a lot of things which might shock a lot of people morally or otherwise, but he didn't hurt anybody with it as far as I know. He was very much on the scene at Ciro's, to focus my attention on his rock involvement, and when he travelled, he took a whole circle of friends along with him - artists, freaks, writers - who would jump up and down and dance about; they were very colourful too, because they used to dress in stuff that Sue had put together specially for these occasions. They became rabid Byrd followers and became so identified with the early Byrds that they accompanied them on their first national promotional tour, to leap around and get it all happening out in Omaha or wherever. Later, Vito moved to Bido Lito's and became a Love fanatic - he wanted to go on and launch Love like he'd helped to launch the Byrds - but he didn't, as has been reported, discover Love, except for himself.

John PS: Arthur Lee is currently fronting a brand new, all black Love. According to our man in Burbank they do a lot of progressive soul stuff plus grist like 'My little red book' and '7 and 7 is', "but boy do they mangle them". The continuing story of Love, folks.....

an album for A&M and got himself on the Lindisfarne tour.

Meanwhile, Stealers Wheel flourished until in early '72, over a year after they'd started, they began to find some stability and decided that the time was right to record an album; after all, they'd been rehearsing long enough. Accordingly, their new management, Ricochet (Robert Wace, Grenville Collins and Ray Williams, who were previously associated with the Kinks), took demos to various producers, and Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller - household names for over 15 years, accepted the invitation - a fact which has not been underplayed in their publicity.

Leiber and Stoller, producers and writers of some of the greatest rock singles of all time (particularly their work with Elvis, the Coasters and the Drifters - not to mention 'Black Denim Trousers' by the Cheers, a Zigzag favourite for over ten years), had never worked with a British group before and were intrigued by the prospect. So, last summer, they arrived in London ready to go to work. They'd been chosen, among other things, because the music was considered special, and the group wanted a special production job by experienced people; they didn't want a one-and-a-half year's build up ruined by incompetence or a rushed job (Bob Johnston, another producer considered for the job, was removed from the list because he had a reputation for working too fast), but even so, it was a bit of a blind date; neither party was at all sure of the other's capabilities.... Stealers Wheel was an unknown quantity to Leiber and Stoller, who in turn hadn't produced anything of worldshaking significance for some years and were, in fact, partly cruising on a reputation earned basically between 1957 and '65.

Nevertheless, the gamble was a success. The projected schedule of five weeks (including one week of preparatory pre-studio discussion) was exceeded somewhat, but the results speak for themselves. How involved had the producers been? It was a very co-operative thing - they saw mistakes that we couldn't recognise, and their criticism was always very constructive. Some people think they came in and took over, but it wasn't like that at all - it was a reciprocal relationship, and any differences of opinion were always discussed very rationally. They knew what we were after - the sound, the music, the overall effect, and they applied their knowledge and expertise to our simplicity, if you like. Everybody was feeling their way to some extent, but we're pleased with how it came out."

The album (A&M AMLS 6812 1), well received by the media (who drew many comparisons with the middle period Beatles sound), is selling well even though the line-up suffered another upheaval between



Current Wheelers: Lisle/Joe/Rod (at the back)/Paul/Luther

STEALERS WHEEL

Despite having been around in one form or another for two years, it's only within the last two months or so that Stealers Wheel have been levered into our lives with extravagant advertising, yards of press, hours of airplay, TV exposure and altogether, a very concentrated and massive publicity campaign - even down to flyposters throughout Soho and appearances on the David Bowie tour. Why, they've even secured a feature in Zigzag (the supreme accolade!) which is what we're doing now..... chatting to drummer Rod Coombes.

Rod joined in January 1972, when the rest of the line-up was Gerry Rafferty - guitar/vocals, Joe Egan - keyboard/vocals, Paul Pinick - lead guitar, and Nick South - bass (who was subsequently replaced by Tony Williams, who stayed in the band until only midway through their album, when various hang-ups necessitated his replacement by De Lisle Harper). Each member has a relatively long and varied history, but it was Gerry Rafferty, disenchanted by the limitations of the Humblebums and the folk scene generally, who assembled the group, after thoughts of electricity had begun to howl through the bones of his brain.

Briefly, the idea was to create an electric band to do justice to the wider range of songs that he and his mate Rab Noakes (who was also in the prototype Stealers Wheel) were turning out; the scope for musical decoration and setting was beyond that traditionally associated with folk music, and Rafferty envisaged a secluded rehearsal period followed by a triumphant return to the concert halls.

It wasn't to be. One problem followed another, as the excited anticipatory optimism of the folk columns in the pop papers began to fade away; members came and went, trial gigs were disappointing, and ego problems were hampering any unity. Rod wasn't in the group at the time, and as far as I've been able to research, there has never been any explanation given for Rab Noakes' departure. One can only assume that they discovered that a songwriting supergroup can never exist; if a writer is prolific and pleased with his work, he's not going to be very happy if his songs lie unused... a group can only use so many numbers after all, and if there was a constant competition as to whose were the best and most suitable, it's easy to see how a too-many-cooks' egos spoil the Scotch broth situation could have arisen. Maybe it was that, or maybe Noakes, who had gained some reputation as a solo folk-singer and writer, preferred the placid, easy-going folk world to the machinations and hustle of the rock industry. Who knows? Anyway, he went back to Scotland, re-thought his ideas, and subsequently returned to London, where he recorded

recording and release, an upheaval which almost saw the collapse of the band. (In fact, one suspects that Stealers Wheel would almost certainly have died on its feet and broken up there and then had it not been for the vast amount of money that was invested in the long term success of the group). Gerry Rafferty, the focal point of Stealers Wheel, the publicity magnet holding together a bunch of unknowns, decided to quit . . . so the band was left hanging without its founder and leader, and the impetus seemed to have drained away just when they needed it most.

Why did Rafferty leave? "It was something to do with touring, I think. . . . he couldn't reconcile himself to all the stagework and travelling - though there might have been some ego problems with Joe Egan, even though the two of them were incredibly close. He probably went the same way as Rab - decided that group life wasn't the answer after all. . . . I know he had a thing about total control, and that caused a few slight problems here and there. His personality was very dominant, and though he wanted to be part of the band, he felt that he had to be the centre of it - at least that was Joe's interpretation of his leaving."

So, the album could have come out to tales of woe and misery, with the group in splinters on the floor, but apprehensions were swept under the carpet and it came out instead to fanfares of trumpets. . . . Luther Grosvenor had arrived at the eleventh hour, not only to avert disaster but also to bolster up any flagging enthusiasm stories with "injections of new energy/rejuvenation" stuff that record companies are wont to use to disguise such cases of stress.

In fact, the band had desperately advertised for a Rafferty replacement, but had come up with nothing. The MM small ad, seeking an "exceptionally talented lead guitarist/vocalist", drew forty hopefuls, out of whom three came close; one of these was too heavily trussed up with contracts to other people, and the other two, both of whom were successfully hired, were subsequently found to be unsuitable for one reason or another. Finally a phone call from Robert Wace to Chris Blackwell revealed that Luther Grosvenor was at a loose end and he came trotting across just in time to prevent Stealers Wheel's image from stumbling into the gutter.

And Luther, with his noisy Spooky Tooth heritage but tasteful guitarplay, was the answer; he could fit into the existing style of the band (his solo Island album proved that) and he could also contribute to a more forceful stage presentation if and when it was required - and it so happened that it was necessitated almost immediately.

Getting themselves on the bill of the recent Bowie tour was a mixed blessing; the audiences had come to see the golden boy and weren't too interested in sitting quietly to hear what Stealers Wheel had to say - so after the opening night, when they saw that they'd be unable to get away with their gentle melodic harmonies, they went away and whisked up some forceful riffy stuff to placate the crowd until Bowie came on. . . . and so the music they played on the rest of the tour was a compromise rather than bona fide Stealers Wheel. "We had to meet a completely different demand and had to adapt accordingly; we couldn't lay back and let the music speak for itself as we hope we could do if we were the main attraction on a bill - but we learnt a lot in terms of presentation if nothing else."

(They'd only done three previous gigs in the entire history of the group, and they were little more than rehearsals - to find reaction to their material before they made their album).

Publicity, Rod admits, has been heavy but is justified because the band has been slogging away for two years. "Individually we've all done a good ten year's bashing - so there's no question of us not having paid our dues - but as a band, I've got to admit that things seemed to have happened rather quickly since the album came out."

True enough - they've been on the road for a good few years. In fact, the paths of three of them (Rod - then in the Luvvers, Luther - then in the VIPs, and Paul - then in the Big Threel) crossed in Hamburg, back in 1964, when they were all involved in the Star Club dusk till dawn trip, playing until they fell down from exhaustion.

Having been through as many different groups, I wondered how it was possible to take a creative role. . . . I mean, on the face of it, it seems to be like a clerk moving from one firm to another, always functioning in a competent but non-creative way. Rod: "In some bands, your contribution is totally dictated, but that of course is very frustrating and I've never stayed in a situation like that for long. Stealers Wheel is a co-operative unit in every respect. . . . we all contribute to arrangements of material, have equal say in decisions, and equal shares in the money."

Over the next few months, they'll be consolidating their initial success by really getting down to a lot of gigging, and then into the studios for their second album - but hopefully, their personnel problems are now settled for good, and they'll have a chance to develop as a trouble-free unit.

Mac
(Next month, Stealers Wheel feature on The Misunderstood etc family tree)

An interview with J.P. Donleavy, author of 'The Ginger Man', 'A Singular Man', 'Meet my maker the Mod Molecule', 'The Saddest Summer of Samuel S', 'The Beastly Beatitudes of Balthazar B' and, most recently, 'The Onion Eaters'.

ZZ: If I could begin with 'The Ginger Man'. . . . It has always been said to me that this was based on life, on a Swede called Ganor Krist.

JPD: Yes, I think this is certainly the belief of a lot of people. Over the years, I've heard many comments from people who either knew or had met Krist, and associated him with the book - including one or two telling me that they were outraged by what I had written about this man. This prompted me to look into my correspondence to see what the truth was, and Krist had indeed read and admired the book just as any reader might - so I was quite surprised; I mean, if at any time he thought that this was some kind of biography of him, he would either have protested in some way or objected to what was in the book. But Brendan Behan, who knew Krist extremely well and who, purely by accident, was the first person ever to read the manuscript of 'The Ginger Man', never at any time thought it was a portrait of Gaynor Krist, and looked on Dangerfield as a fictional character. But it's true to say that a lot of things that happened in the life of Gaynor Krist, who was indeed quite a close friend of mine, were quite similar to my own experiences - and these were the sort of things which I wrote about in the book. He himself was an interesting man and someone who I was extremely

fond of - possibly because he would listen to anything I ever had to say without ever questioning me.

ZZ: Also at one point, I thought that Behan was in 'The Ginger Man'.

JPD: Yes, this is true. His declaration was that he was proud to make his appearance in the book. He was Balmy Bower, in the Catacombs scene, though in the original edition, I think there was a lot more of him. . . . I had to refine the book down considerably from its full original manuscript, and he may not have played as big a part in the edited edition.

ZZ: You were at Trinity College at that time, so how did you come to meet Behan?

JPD: It was because Trinity is right in the centre of Dublin, where I happened to meet Behan, just locally at Davy Byrne's one day, where he was introduced to me as an author. Then I was introduced to him as an author and this, within a few minutes, produced a battle and confrontation between Behan and myself out on the street. This was a huge joke perpetrated on both of us by our friends, who thought it was quite funny that we should be introduced to each other as authors.

ZZ: Knowing the result?

JPD: Possibly, yes, and also because everybody in Ireland is a sort of author or writer of one kind or another. So Behan and I squared off outside this pub but, in fact, we didn't actually come to blows, which was quite interesting, for although he had this big kind of public reputation, he was in fact a very serious man and had a very deep abiding respect for being a writer. His public reputation

overshadowed what Behan was really like. . . . he was a very serious man.

ZZ: So, after that you got to know him quite well?

JPD: Yes. It was a case of his being the kind of person you'd meet around Dublin, which is in some ways like a great big country house; you open up a bedroom door, which could be a side road, and you meet your friends right there on Grafton Street. One's life and conversations took place within a few hundred square feet of Dublin City - so you would run into the same people constantly and each night it would reach a kind of peak of performance I suppose. . . . when the pubs were about to close, at which point every one would have had enough to drink and would be confronting each other - trying to beat one another up, I suppose. So one knew everybody; it wasn't a question of saying so and so was a close friend of yours, it was simply a question of being in proximity, which everyone was.

ZZ: So 'The Ginger Man' was really all about that time in Dublin?

JPD: Yes, very much so. I think it was partly the fact that after the war, Ireland was one of the few places in Europe to have retained the same sort of lifestyle that existed in other countries before the war; Dublin had enough to eat and somehow appeared to be a sort of Mecca to a lot of people. One could remember people who came from California or Mexico or Australia, and so on, most of them quite rich and so able to travel, and they appeared to collect in Dublin, each man having his own reason for being there.

ZZ: Was there anybody else in the book

A DIARY OF TWO BANDS

The monthly progress of two groups with varying backgrounds, trying to climb the ladder to success: big houses, big cars, loads of nubile chicks hanging around, a wardrobe full of lovely clothes, and lots and lots of money).

ducks deluxe

Deciding at the end of last year that they were going to accept as many gigs as the Iron Horse Agency could hustle in, Ducks Deluxe earned over £500 in January alone (including a remunerative guest appearance in a TV play). Their roadie, mentioned in the last issue, decided to split, leaving them without a van - so manager Dai forked out and purchased Brinsley Schwarz's old blue Transit, but at the moment they still have (and don't particularly worry about it) no roadie, and do all the equipment humping themselves.

Ken, the bassplayer, left in the middle of December (an amicable split based on his preference for freer music than their solid rock'n'roll) and was replaced by Nick Garvey, ex-road manager of the Flamin' Groovies. He's never been in a group before but, says Sean Tyla, as well as being a great bassplayer, he's both an excellent guitarist and singer. Consequently the band has modified to accommodate his harmonies, and he and Martin Belmont often switch instruments. Nick's equipment consists of an Epiphone Rivoli bass (played through the same old Vox T60 amplifier) and a Rickenbacker 6 string guitar. They've also invested in a better pa - a Marshall 100 watt, though until now ones are constructed, they still use their crummy old speakers. Also new: a set of cymbals for Tim Roper (to replace the ones he's battered to tatters), and two new microphones.

Apart from the personnel change, the main point of interest over the past few weeks was their appearance at the Man Christmas Party in Wales, where their set (together with those of all other participants) was recorded for posterity; the highlights of the affair will appear on a United Artists album. Sean, who is also helping with the production, editing and mixing of the record, reckons that two of their tracks will be used ('The Duck' and 'Boogaloo Babel'), but emphasises

that this is strictly a one-off deal with UA, because they're still resisting all record company offers.

Other original numbers from their current repertoire of 35 or so songs include 'Pensacola Nightmare', 'American Mother', 'Slow Song', 'Hearts on my sleeve', 'Bandit of my mind' & 'Fireball' and they also do things like JJ Cale's 'Nowhere to run', a couple of Ray Charles songs, Dylan's 'Down in the Flood' and 'She belongs to me', plus old favourites like 'Lawdy Miss Clawdy', 'Route 66', 'Oh Carol' & 'Walking the Dog', which no doubt go down well on their pub gigs, where they are sometimes required to play a 2½ hour set.

Their first bit of national press came when Steve Peacock did a nice review of one of their gigs in Sounds.

With 3 songwriters, they're currently pouring out more numbers than they can cope with, but by the time they feel ready to record, they reckon they'll have sorted out the best material. So, despite all kinds of record company interest, Ducks Deluxe continue to gig away in their own sweet style without succumbing to tempting carrots; until they feel ready to make a record (a single rather than an album, they think), they'll go on channelling all their energy into gigging, writing and rehearsing (which they do in their living room, despite the dockers, who lives over the road, throwing stones at their window to register his disapproval of the volume).

stardust

All is quiet on the Stardust front: not a whisper (nary even a whimper) from Jefferson Cloves and his mates. Presumably they're either recovering from Christmas or they're still sorting out their teething troubles. All that came of their column last issue was an indignant letter from producer Peter Eden (who was mentioned as having failed to reply or return the tape they sent for his perusal) stressing that he was "annoyed by our accusation because in all his time in the record industry he has always tried to be fair to artists known and unknown". Not only are we sorry about any untrue accusations, but we'll shower the blessings of the cosmic duck upon you if you re-release that rare Softley album. . . . where is Mick Softley, by the way?



talking with J.P. DONLEAVY

who could be identified?

JPD: Well, I suppose all the people in the book were actual people and friends that I knew, with the exception, perhaps, of Dangerfield – he being the most fictionalised character of all, with the other people, being so real, giving him a kind of reality. A lot of readers don't actually realise that Dangerfield is, in fact, very much established as a character because of what he doesn't say, but listens to other people saying. O'Keefe is, in some ways, a very important part of 'The Ginger Man' – he nearly establishes Dangerfield, as it were.

ZZ: And who was O'Keefe based upon?

JPD: He was another very close friend of mine, a very curious man, and one of the few people I'm still in constant touch with. . . . but he's a real strange one. He gets stranger every year that goes by. He's presently living in the salt flats of Utah – yes, Mormon country – out in a place on the Utah-Nevada border. I was under the impression that he was living in a kind of town, you know, but in fact he's living in a place with a population of just 13 people, and all it is is salt and sun.

ZZ: Was Flann O'Brien in the book – he had a reputation for warring with Behan?

JPD: No, he had nothing to do with me really. I think he was a bit older, and I was out of that kind of life in Dublin to a certain extent – the literary life. He was someone who lived his own life, but he obviously would have known Behan – in some ways far better than myself and over a longer period of time – but I think he was of an older generation, and I didn't ever come into contact with him.

ZZ: Was Samuel Becket teaching at Trinity at that time?

JPD: No. Becket was someone else who, at that time, was, as far as I know, cut off from Dublin; I can only recall that after I'd left there, he might have come for visits. He was someone whose work was read and spoken about, but like most of the writers that Dublin has produced, he disappeared from the city after his books had been published.

ZZ: How long did 'The Ginger Man' take to write, being your first book?

JPD: I suppose it probably existed over a period of three to four years; I must have started it in 1949, perhaps, and seriously and intensively begun working on it in maybe 1950 – then I worked on it right up until the latter part of 1954 and up to when it was published in June 1955.

ZZ: There was an enormous reality in it, because I was living in Dublin at the time the play was on (it was taken off after 4 nights because of the intervention of the Catholic Church) but returned to England soon after – and I said that if anyone wanted to find you, you'd be in the back bar at Jury's, because that bar featured very much in the book.

JPD: Yes, that was one of my great favourite places in Dublin, Jury's. It must have had one of the most handsome interiors of any room in the world – I mean as far as I was concerned. . . . Its mahogany panelling and its marble. It was always empty, though it had its kind of curious customers from the country – a lot of cattle dealers and people of that sort used to have their big steak dinners at Jury's and drink their pints of Guinness. . . . and they had these waitresses, in kind of very religious garb – like the waitresses at Bewley's Cafe. Yes, Dublin had marvellous places then. . . . you could literally disappear inside them and they were full

of their own sort of intrinsic life.

ZZ: When you write, do you work to a routine?

JPD: Yes – what happens is that, being older and more experienced as a writer I suppose, I tend to work harder and longer now. I'm more disciplined. I may work on a book in kind of very easy stages, over a period of two or three years, and then I generally stop at a certain point and start all over again. . . . then I work at an enormously concentrated pitch until I finish it – and sometimes, it might take from 6 months to a year, and that generally is seven days a week. I usually finish around two or three in the afternoon, but there have been cases, like during 'The Beastly Beatitudes Of Balthazar B', when I probably wouldn't even go out for three days at a time. That's a book I wrote in a very concentrated way.

ZZ: To me, 'The Beastly Beatitudes Of Balthazar B' was your funniest book, and of course it ended up at Trinity again.

JPD: I always forget what is funny and what isn't funny in books, but certainly I often pick up a book and may suddenly find it very funny. The thing is that writing books can make you very pessimistic and even depressed, because it's a kind of technical thing you're doing, and also you're producing something at such a slow pace, just line after line, very methodically – so I look at my books in a different light from the reader, who may just flash over the pages. But I often read 'The Onion Eaters', which is a book that I quite enjoy myself, and that sometimes makes me laugh.

ZZ: Was 'The Onion Eaters' an allegory?

JPD: You mean as a book? Well, no, not really. I can remember getting a fan letter from America, where some girl had been reading it and she couldn't quite get the meaning because she couldn't find the allegory in it. No, 'The Onion Eaters' is, again, just a kind of documentary about Ireland, of Irish life in 1946.

ZZ: 'The Onion Eaters' seems to me to be what you've been aiming towards in other books.

JPD: Yes, this is possible. I enjoyed writing that a lot, because it was so full of this kind of insane life that Ireland had in those days; sometimes, years later, you couldn't believe that such things could happen. To me, 'The Onion Eaters' is like an Irish party itself. My work is a great deal different from Samuel Becket's but it's often occurred to me, with things like 'Waiting For Godot' for instance, that Becket's things are very documentary – far more so than people would ever imagine. You could literally come across scenes like that in Ireland every day; it has a quality that no other country in the world has – where certain things happen but are so commonplace that they are just accepted. . . . like, say, violence has become accepted in New York.

ZZ: Can you give an example of what you mean?

JPD: The mere fact that a man in a pub in Ireland can suddenly begin to recite Shakespeare in a very loud voice; just sitting there talking away to himself. . . . and no-one will take any notice or think it at all strange. If anyone did that in London, they might call the police and have him locked up.

ZZ: Do you ever go into pubs or bars in Ireland these days?

JPD: No, I don't actually – not very often anyway. Once in a while I might go to an

old country pub, but I have had unnerving experiences. You see, in Ireland, you can never be sure who knows you, because no-one ever gives any indication that they do. Years ago, I walked into a pub, I think it was the Bailey, never dreaming that anyone would know who I was or where I'd come from. It was late at night, and I was really looking forward to a pint of Guinness, when suddenly the entire pub began to chant "J P Donleavy, J P Donleavy" – and suddenly I found myself running for the door, because I'm a shy person, not overly shy, but I certainly love my privacy, especially in public places. . . . and this sort of thing cured me of public houses in Ireland. I mean, their chanting was obviously in good spirit, with no discourtesy being intended, but I just found it extremely unnerving.

ZZ: You left Ireland for a long period. . . . you're a New Yorker who came to Ireland and then left it?

JPD: Yes. After a while, I became aware that the people were too close to each other and that it was not an ideal country in which to work as a writer. I went back to America for a short period, and then came back to live on the Isle of Man. Then I lived in London for a while, and about 4 years ago, I went back to Ireland, where I've been living ever since.

ZZ: Early on, you were turning your work into plays, but you don't seem to do that any more.

JPD: Well, it's possibly an economic thing – we couldn't seem to get very long runs with the plays and I tended not to write in that form any longer, though the plays I did write still get a considerable number of productions, in various different languages too.

ZZ: I liked 'Fairy Tales of New York', which I think would probably run much longer if it were staged today.

JPD: Yes, that's probably true. I think the theatre business is pretty tough, all the same. . . . it's the economic problems. But I loved dramatising plays – much more interesting and involving than films, say.

ZZ: Have you been involved with films?

JPD: Yes; we hope to make 'The Ginger Man'. Over the years, I have had quite a number of approaches to make my books into films, but I've never been able to come to agreement with the people. I did, however, manage to reach agreement over both 'The Ginger Man' and 'Balthazar B', both of which are to be filmed. . . . so one is at the beginning of attempting that lark now.

ZZ: The film is a director's medium rather than a writer's, wouldn't you say?

JPD: I'm not sure that's absolutely true. Certainly a director has a lot to do with a film, and conflict arises on the basis that all the story telling should be visual, but I feel that drama is very much involved with speech on the screen as well as action. I think the director's role is a little bit over-rated. . . . I think that if a few of them got a little less full of their creative selves, it'd be a lot better for them and films, because I think they tend to over-estimate their abilities or what they in fact contribute to making pictures.

ZZ: Going back to 'Fairy Tales of New York', you get a lot of humour out of death. . . . I think Americans take death far more seriously than anyone else.

JPD: This is true, and it's a thing which has always fascinated me. In New York, you are so immensely conscious of death; it's a terrifying prospect, because the body has to go through so much before it

's allowed to decompose. In Ireland, the thought of dying has no kind of terrible thing about it; I'm a sort of farmer and see cattle being born and dying and being slaughtered – and the fact that you also have to die becomes far less important. . . . It doesn't frighten one at all. In America though, there are so many steps between life and death, that aesthetically it's very kind of upsetting.

'Fairy Tales of New York' is now a novel, which is being published in the Autumn; it's unique in as much as it was a play first and was then turned into a book. The business of death is treated much more in the novel, where Christian becomes the assistant at the undertaker's and is working in the funeral parlour.

ZZ: You seem to have a lot of realism in your novels.

JPD: Yes. As I've often said before, I'm a kind of highbrow reporter. . . . I only do what any good newspaper man does, and perhaps sometimes not as well. But I generally look at things, and if I'm writing about a place, I'll have examined everything, even the geology of the ground on which the building stands, and the architecture of every part of it. . . . it's very fascinating to do that. I'm a great expert on New York City; I know everything that there is to know about it – all its underground tunnels, when buildings were put up and what stood there before them. . . . these sort of things are just naturally fascinating to me. I'm just interested in the bedrock of geology and geography and even climatic conditions – I'm always aware of what is happening to the weather at any given time in the United States, and the tides and all that sort of thing and even if none of this information ever comes into the book, it's still something I'm unconsciously aware of as I work.

ZZ: Do you have books on your shelves – books like Whitakers Almanac, for reference?

JPD: Yes, I have a lot of reference books. . . . I adore them. Often, when I'm looking at books, I'll buy everything I see. . . . stacks of them, and I love examining them and maps too are another great favourite of mine; I love looking at maps of cities.

ZZ: Did you do any special research for 'A Singular Man'?

JPD: For that book, I drew very much upon my own experiences in the fields of litigation and intimidation; for instance, in common with anybody who's making money, I deal a lot with lawyers and have plenty of law cases. 'A Singular Man' arose from my observations of life in New York; the troubles and life of a man making money. . . . how he suffers all these rather nebulous trials that he can never quite put his finger on, but which are constantly threatening him. And the money aspects, the power of it and the accumulation of it, how it affected George Smith, and the relationships which came about in his business.

ZZ: What sort of litigation were you involved in then? One is used to successful pop musicians going through various court cases, but how does it come about for a writer?

JPD: With a writer, it usually comes when he begins to make money, because suddenly everybody thinks that they own what is making the money. My litigation started originally with 'The Ginger Man' and extended over a period of about 17 years. I mean, these days, I employ lawyers all over the world, like probably any big corporation – as many as fifteen lawyers work for me in different places. When he first starts writing, any author



thinks that it's capable of making money, but as soon as it actually does make money and profit, you find that a lot of fingers are reaching for it, and you have a lot of piracies and infringements and so on. I'm a very mild looking man, but that's maybe very deceptive; it's often thought that writers are people who have no business sense, and no abilities to protect their interests, but I think it's been discovered that as soon as a writer makes money, he quickly turns into a business man and finds this way of protecting his interests. I'm no exception. . . . I have no agents, or people working for me in that capacity, but I generally employ people who run things for me.

ZZ: Without an agent, do you have one of your lawyers to fix each deal?

JPD: No, I fix all my own deals and do all my own contracts. Though I employ all these lawyers, I take care of all the negotiation, which I have discovered is indeed a very wise thing to do. When you are involved in a lot of litigation, you quickly learn a good bit about the law, though it's a big mistake not to take legal advice. . . . I have a very healthy respect for lawyers myself. But generally, you have to be ruthless and take a very strong position on what you own and wish to protect – if not, you find yourself in more difficulties than ever.

ZZ: You live on a farm outside Mullingar in County Westmeath. Do your surroundings affect your writing?

JPD: Until now, I was always finding myself lacking ideal working conditions and was always desperate for them – but now, in some respects I suppose, I have the best conditions I've ever had. The house I presently have is one which has kind of wings around a courtyard, and all of my working rooms are in one wing. It's a fairly bigish place with an internal telephone system for phoning other parts. . . . you'd die walking otherwise! . . . but it's the best working conditions I've had so far – with my windows overlooking a rose garden.

ZZ: Do you type all your own books?

JPD: I type a lot of the work and do some in longhand, and then my secretary generally retypes the clean copy for me. Then I work on the clean copy, working rather as a film editor puts together a film script; I write over things, cut things out and generally work on the clean copy – and sometimes my secretary has to retype a

section four or five times. If I had to do all the retyping myself, I'd find it dreadful, because I lose my temper very easily. . . . I get furious when I make a typing mistake.

ZZ: You described yourself as a farmer earlier. . . .

JPD: Well, yes – that was inadvertent. I bought the house with some land and in order to keep the grass short, I bought some cattle which I thought would act as lawnmowers. Then, after buying a few cattle, my wife, who in fact runs the farm and has become quite an expert farmer and cattle breeder, went out and bought, by mistake, some heifers – and that's how we got into breeding cattle. You see, she was out to buy some bullocks and didn't know the difference at the market – and she ended up with a dozen heifers. She phoned me up, crying about her mistake, so I said 'That's great – bring them home!' . . . and then we got a bull and started to have babies. As you probably know yourself, cattle prices have been zooming, and now we have quite a big herd, and a lot of pedigree bulls and pedigree heifers and so on. So I often find myself out in the rain, wrestling with bulls and cattle, giving them injections and treating their eyes and all kind of things. . . . and also delivering calves!

ZZ: As a writer, did you have any influences on you from other writers at all?

JPD: Yes, I think so. Certainly people like James Joyce, Franz Kafka and Henry Miller – but since I was a painter before I wrote, I sort of cut off a lot of what might have been stronger influences on me as a writer, and sort of started out fresh in a way. I look upon that as having been an advantage – but those writers I mentioned were certainly an influence in one way or another.

ZZ: Are you ever aware, if I may ask a totally irrelevant question, about rock music?

JPD: Yes. I watch it very carefully and listen to a lot of it; I watch 'Top of the Pops' and though I'm quite critical of it, when something strikes my interest, I take it up and follow it. . . . and some pop music I find very impressive and very beautiful.

ZZ: Do you have albums at home?

JPD: Yes, because my children, who are quite grown up now, have collections of music and stuff – but I myself try to listen and will, in fact, buy various pop music which I find impressive.

ZZ: Which groups have impressed you?

JPD: Well, I can't probably reel off the names of various people, but one of them, for instance, that piece of music. . . . is it Peter Skellern who sings that 'You're A Lady'?

ZZ: Yes, Peter Skellern.

JPD: Now that was a piece of music that I found most impressive – a very kind of profound piece – and that's the kind of thing which will catch my attention. There are a lot of composers and singers whose work is excellent. . . . I think it's very exciting and interesting, the things being done in music today. Michael Wale

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'The Onion Eaters' (1971) (1969)

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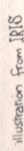
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Before we start Chapter 2 of the endless Byrd saga, let me bring you up to date. During the course of my being driven insane by Kim Fowley, he told me that the implication in the Byrd camp was that the current members ought to look for other employment after May 1973 (which is cool; Clarence is signed as a solo to Warners, Skip is signed to Signpost, and new man John Guerin can earn vast amounts as a session man). Kim reckons that the newly reformed original Byrds will not only put out their Asylum album (around March), but they'll also do a big tour which will result in a live album and a film. . . . thus maximising the profit potential before the inevitable collapse. After that, who knows what will happen? Crosby, McGuinn, Nash & Young?

But here it came, all the same: yards and yards of critical appraisal, star-building press, headlines, and the publicity machines made them into glossy heroes... nothing they ever did was without romance. Here's a typical teen-mag article about our fun loving boys, which'll probably give you a bit of the flavour of the times – the days of glamorous stars and untouchable gods. 3

two walkie-talkie sets, a record player, stereo and radios all over the house. I have plugged the different devices together, using jacks, and that way I can record off the radio set or plug the secret ambition in to plug my kitchen-beaker listening into the color TV set and watch the patterns change."

୦୫/୦୮/୧୦
(୧୨୨୩)
୦୫/୦୮/୧୦

He has a balcony from which he can see half of Los Angeles.

Mike, a man of few words, describes his apartment as "Very nice - without any tourist attractions." He explains: "It's somewhere to hang out, sleep, eat now and again, and watch TV. There's not a lot in the place — a self with a few books, fairy tales, comic books ('Spider Man') and John Lennon's 'Spanish in the Works,' which I love."

Mike likes to eat fruit and vegetables and cheese-

CHAPTER TWO
BYRONIA
STARDOG AND
ENGLISH BRID
(AND THE EFFECT
OF/ON BOB DYLAN)
April 1965 - March 1966

"Somebody I hope to own a Ferrari or a Porsche. Now I'm driving a new MC, which is just great. It was the first big thing I bought after we started earning some real money. One of my hobbies is doing the repair work on it."

Gene, like Jim McGuinn, is mesmerized by gadgets, devices and toys. He says: "I *love* toys—messing about with them, taking them to pieces and putting them together again. Mechanical toys fascinate me."

Gene comes from Tipton, Missouri, of farming stock, and he prefers his clothing to be made out of rough fabrics—leather, denim, suede and reverse calf. Now and again he wears medals around his neck, mostly gold ornaments.

He is blessed with an inquiring mind and says: "I

With rehearsals, recording sessions, tours, local concerts and club stints, the Byrds don't have too much leisure, but when David is off-duty he likes to read science fiction and listen to the music of Ravi Shankar, Sandy Bull and Miles Davis.

David is unlike the rest of the group in that he neither smokes nor drinks alcohol. Also, he never watches television and rarely goes to movies. "I drink quarts of apple juice every day and my favorite food is fruits and vegetables."

All of the Byrds are acutely conscious of the health content of various foods. None more than Chris who has studied what is good and what is bad in food. He usually goes to health food stores and I only eat vegetables, fruits and protein. I try to eat whatever I can get. I eat fruits and vegetables and whenever possible I do all my own cooking. Occasionally I will eat Mexican or Italian food so long as it's pure."

On his front porch swings a hammock in which Chris likes to lie, playing his guitar as the sun sets.

Once a cowboy, Chris's proudest possession currently is a suede cowboy jacket with which he wears simple bluejeans.

These are the liberty-loving Byrds. They have many common bonds.

For their friends they choose mainly the free-wheeling, free-thinking, free-living, long-haired, barefooted, sun-worshipping Californians who first recognized the talent which, in a few frantic, hurried months, has taken the Byrds time and again to the top of the world's

And here's a retrospective press hand-out (written, I think, by Billy James in 1970), which conveys the idea of the Byrds' music as a nostalgia trigger:

"With the exception of the Beatles, no other group has changed the course of popular music more than the Byrds, the first electric group with a folk repertoire. For some reason, folk-rock became a fad, a trend, a phase, the bandwagon that the music business jumped on. At the same time, there was a whole generation ready to explode, to become the Woodstock nation. America didn't know about the underground when the Byrds played San Francisco, bringing along with them their incredible band of hairy dancers. Now we know what freakiness is. But then there was no connection we could make comfortably to the bunch of people who were the Byrdsfreaks. They followed the group to San Francisco, travelled with them to the midwest and eventually left them for.... who knows what? Some for Frank Zappa's Mothers', some for communes in Santa Fe and Maui, some for marriage and diffusion into the straight world.

"But that first record, 'Mr Tambourine Man', was some sort of signal, releasing inhibitions all over the place.... among the musicians, the Jefferson Airplane and the Lovin Spoonful were the next to take off. In 1965, music was the medium and the Byrds carried the message.

"It was a new kind of excitement for all of us, that Beatlemania. Bouncy and light it made us feel.... younger than yesterday; each morning was a wonderful reminder that it was another day. We were all one, under one flag, a non-partisan paisley print, waving in the one sky, that glorious blue that covered us all. It was a kind of togetherness that comes once in a generation.... once in a lifetime. We learned how to smile at one another, to laugh and be friendly with everyone; we learned how to love. A wonderful year.

"And when the Undertakers, and Freddie & the Dreamers, and Gerry and the Pacemakers and the innumerable forgettable groups were thrust upon us from across the sea, each one far far more exciting to see and hear, man.... and the canyons were green and the girls were golden till we thought it must all be a dream, a hazy morning half-awake fantasy like the morning after you've fallen in love and you're sure there's something, something really neat.... oh yes! It's that rock and roll, shake yo' soul, jump outta dat bed and let it mess with yo' head.

"McGuinn and McGuire couldn't get no higher, in LA you know where that's at.... believe it. In LA, things couldn't get NO higher. At the Trip, Joe Larsen and four quasi-Stones types with dangerous leers and obvious motives played every



April 1965 Byrds: Crosby/McGuinn/Hillman/Clarke and Clark.

Note that their suits have already been discarded.

night, every night while Zal Yanovsky and Joe Butler (from the Spoonful) played Keystone Kop antics in the foyer, while Kim Fowley (LA songwriter, singer, etc) did chicken trots and yawning stretches on the dance floor, while Danny Hutton, on the brink of something great (later formed 3 Dog Night), danced with the girls that Karl Franzoni attracted, while Karl Franzoni stuck out his tongue, adjusted his tights, patted his outrageous hair into shape, and attracted girls.

"It was into this, from this, that the Byrds came. Mike Clarke, who was only 17 and everyone knew it but he played in clubs anyway, with his carefully curled-to-straighten hair and Californian coastal grin. Gene Clark with the voice of an angel, wearing a sports jacket and Beatle boots (same with McGuinn and Chris Hillman). And David Crosby with his hair set on his head like a wig hat, and his shirt from DeVoss, with sleeves puffed at the shoulder and fitting the body at no point in particular. Despite all attempts on their parts to fit into the mod London/Liverpool look, they were just what we needed.... truly American, absurdly Californian, almost painfully Southern Californian."

** ** ** ** **

And here's some more discussion which gives a clearer indication of the changing relationship between McGuinn and Dylan:

"I'll tell you my history with Dylan; I remember him from Gerdel's when he was sort of scuffling. I was working and had some bread - he wasn't. He was into the in-group kind of thing - I wasn't.... I was just sort of on the perimeter, digging it at the time. I was in the Chad Mitchell Trio, a commercial folk group, and that wasn't 'groovy'. I didn't dig it either.... I was doing it to get around, to get experience playing music - until it got to the point where I wasn't learning music, I was unlearning it.

Next time I saw Dylan was in LA after the Byrds were working together, and we showed him our arrangement of 'Mr Tambourine Man'. 'Wow, man, you can dance to that!' he said; he couldn't believe the transition it had gone through. In fact, we sang him some of his other stuff at Ciro's and he didn't even recognise them. So we got to be friends after a while.

One time in New York I saw him, and we went back to his place - some apartment where he was staying. He was on the couch and I was sitting on the floor.... one of those kinds of conversations. But he said he really liked what I was starting to do with his music - he thought that I had got my own style going, and he dug it. I didn't think he would.

Q: I have never tried to measure the profound influence he has had on anyone; they all say he has influenced them - but exactly how it affects them is important to understand.

RM: He didn't start influencing me until I started singing his material; as I got into it, I started to appreciate it. I began to feel what he felt when he was doing his songs - sort of a rebellious, funky attitude he had going. We had this saving grace that we were doing something with it, aside from just copying it. It wasn't just a second-hand Dylan thing; it modulated to somewhere else.... electrically. But then he started doing with his own music what we had done with his earlier stuff - so we couldn't really do any more of his music because he was doing it himself.

I talked to Dylan one night; I got the feeling that he was guilty about making all that bread. He said 'Man, I don't know how you're ever going to make a million dollars. I'd like to help you somehow'. I figured he wanted someone to play with, to hang out with. He was into a talking thing; he'd vary at times between putting himself and everybody and me on, and then just talking straight. We got into some beautiful philosophical things about the nature of the universe, deep stuff, then we'd go back to trivia - riffing on words,

this dub on him with Dylan and Jack Elliott singing. It hadn't been released on the previous album because of a contractual problem with Jack.... it was sloppy, kind of 'Hey, hey Mr Tambourine Man....' The words weren't all clear, but it was groovy though - had its charm. We caught it from there and worked it up in a more contemporary style at the time, the beat and the wispy kind of freaked out vocal treatment. The union sounds came from the 12 string guitar doing plegal cadences - like the Joan Baez thing. It sounded different with electric.

At this time, Dylan, though a giant hero in folk fields, was still a comparatively unknown singer, despite the fact that his songs (for instance those popularised by Peter Paul & Mary) were being hummed around the world.

McGuinn explains the effects of the Byrds' hit:

Q: I have this historical kind of hang-up; a question that has always interested me is the difference in time between 'Mr Tambourine Man' and 'Like A Rolling Stone'. Roger McGuinn: We cut 'Mr Tambourine Man' before 'Rolling Stone'.... I don't know how much before.

(In fact, if this naughty interviewer had done any homework he'd have known that 'Like A Rolling Stone', which was Dylan's first really big hit single, was released in July 65.... about 4 months after the Byrds' single. Back to McGuinn.) RM: Are you asking if we were responsible at all for Dylan's success?

Q: Yeah, how much effect do you think you had on him?

RM: I think we might have had a fairly substantial effect on his pop success. He was already quite a popular folk singer in this country (USA), and he'd become a pop artist in England too, and there is like a two or three month lag between what happens in England and what happens here, so that, I think, helped his thing snowball. But I think as far as getting him off, we were sort of like the booster rocket that got him off the ground as a pop artist here.

Q: When you were playing here, he visited you.... he played with you a couple of times, didn't he?

RM: Yeah, we got to be pretty chummy for a while, but he was the guru and we were the students.

Q: Except that you must've turned him on; he was hearing what you were doing.

RM: Well, later the relationship changed to more buddies, you know. I mean, as we both sort of branched out into different things. I haven't seen him in a couple of years.... I sort of miss him now.

ZZ: McGuinn was the only Byrd playing on 'Mr Tambourine Man' wasn't he?

Gene Parsons: That's right; the others at that time couldn't make it in the studio. You see, they were only allotted so much time - Columbia had given them a limited trial period in the studio and their manager reckoned they wouldn't be able to do it, so they used session men along with Roger's 12 string, which is what gave it the distinctive sound. The vocal harmony was the Byrds though.

So, that most famous of all bass intros was played not by Hillman, but by Larry Knechtal. Also playing on the single were Hal Blaine on drums and Leon Russell on guitar.

Chris Hillman: That's about the only track we didn't all play on - except that we used a session drummer sometimes.

Jim Gordon, speaking recently, says 'Hal Blaine used to do most of the Byrds work, but when he couldn't make it, I went up and did it. They never used the band; McGuinn did it, but the others were session guys.' #

Well, whoever played on it (and maybe we can find out from McGuinn someday), it's not a bad debut album.

The 4 Dylan tracks were all recent - 3 were off Dylan's previous album ('Another Side Of - August 1964), and the other hadn't come out by Dylan when the Byrds had cut it.

A lot of the mix is pretty muffled, and the record suffers from an overall sameness, but there's plenty of interest. If I start doing long reviews of each album, we'll be here till next year, so I'll just pick out some little things: there's a pre-acid rock guitar snatch in 'It's no use', and the fade ending of 'Don't doubt yourself' even has a bit of Bo Diddley/Mona guitar (a popular rhythm of the period); 'Chimes of freedom' (which the sleeve says 'they dedicate to Donovan on club dates') has a heavy pinch from 'Colours' (released Spring 1965); 'We'll meet again' gives the waiting world its first taste of Vera Lynn-rock, which they got from the film 'Dr Strangelove' (remember the end of the film - where that mad cowboy Yank rides an atom bomb to earth? Wahool.)

"The Byrds play dancing music" said someone at the time - and that infuriated folkies, who certainly didn't dig the idea of people dancing to their folk music.

Tom Paxton was sufficiently affronted to dip his quill into vitriol and attack 'Folk Rot' in Sing Out magazine.

Less than 2 years later, Mr Paxton partially ate his words and himself made a folk-rock single. Not only that, but a lot of other Greenwich Village folkies, inspired by the Beatles and the Byrds, started getting into rock; John Phillips,



Dylan playing harp with the Byrds - note the small Fender amps.

other producers for the label were out of their depth unless they were supervising plastic middle of the road crap. Melcher, at least, had some experience with teenage type pop, so they figured that he might be able to handle the job.... after all, he'd been half of a duo called Bruce & Terry (with ex-Beach Boy Bruce Johnston) and had produced semi-hits like 'She's gone' for the Rip Chords.

The sleeve note to that album (again by Billy James) captured the whole atmosphere and vitality of something happening in Los Angeles in Spring 1965. Ciro's was probably like the Speakeasy (or even worse), but it sure sounds like a magic swirling ship in those notes.... and every one was there to see the Byrds, including Little Richard, Sonny & Cher (I got you babe! was the big hit of that summer), Mary Travers, Barry McGuire (poised to leap onto the folk-rock wagon), Jackie de Shannon and Buffy Sainte Marie. Not to mention Michael Pollard. McGuinn, even in those early days, trusted that everything would work out alright.

Anyway - the record itself. Well, for a start, there was a wee bit of jiggery pokery.

Steve Stills and Richie Furay, Zalman Yanovsky and John Sebastian, Denny Doherty and Cass Elliott.... even Barry McGuire. Pop music had started giving way to rock, and musicians who had only been able to find integrity in folk music began to explore the areas that McGuinn and his ilk had opened up.

McGuinn: I think we came to stand for something - we were seen as a symbol of something good, something new away from the stagnation that had occurred in pop music. Also, we were the first group to incorporate any intellectual value to speak of. Up until then, it had been like 'baby I love you - see you at the drive-in movie tonight'.... and Dylan's lyrical intellect was an innovation.¹⁶

Despite this, they were playing to screaming teenyboppers: 'We were doing dates on this big civic arena circuit, and the kids would scream right through and throw jelly beans - just like they'd seen in the movies and knew they were supposed to'.¹⁶

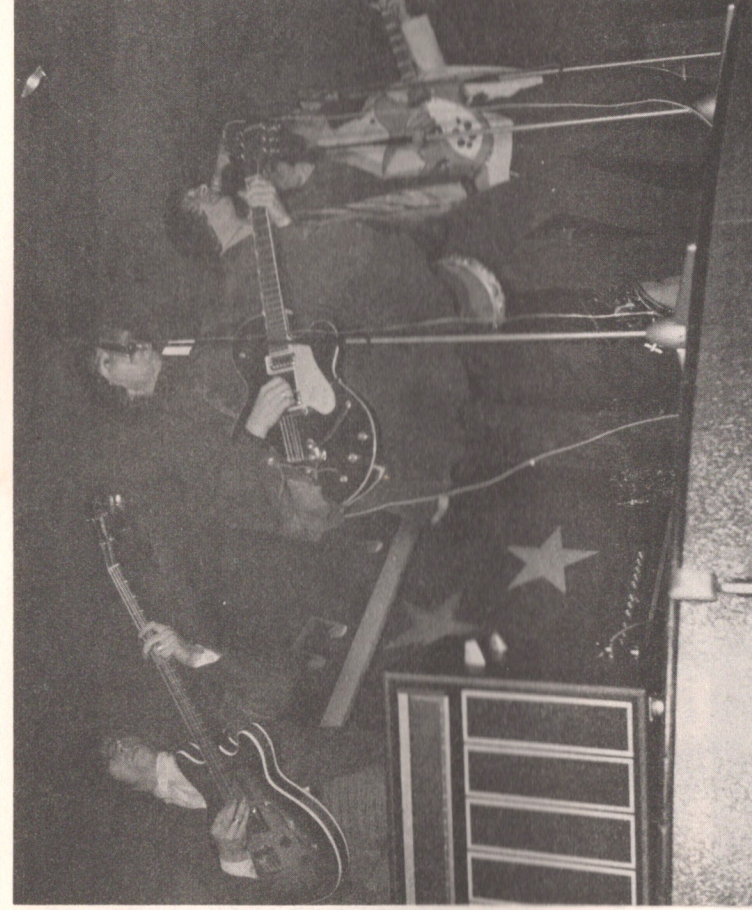
** ** ** ** **

The British Tour: August 1965

To consolidate their single's great success, they flew into England for a 22 day tour. They needn't have bothered, as far as the press was concerned; audiences were generally satisfied, but the press refused to acknowledge the fact and gave them reviews varying from apathetic to downright hostile. All this basically because British pop, after years in the dark shadows, had suddenly surfaced as a world beater - so how dare the Byrds emulate our style and try to force a spearhead into the world group scene, an exclusively British domain. The bloody nerve of it! It would have been like us sending over Don Lang and his Frantic Five (remember them?) to play at the Apollo in New York.... or at least, that's how the press saw it. Don't forget the feeling of the period; we were bulging with patriotic pride.... England Swings, and all that - it was the Union Jack's year of glory. The Byrds couldn't have come at a worse time.

No sooner had they got off the plane than they met with their first taste of good old British hospitality; an enquiry agent representing an English group called the Birds (including Ronnie Wood, now of the Faces), presented them with writs claiming infringement of their registered name. Whether any legal action followed this publicity stunt has never, to my knowledge, been recorded.

A couple of weeks before the visit, the pop papers had run articles; Derek Taylor, who had recently been appointed their press officer, had arranged phone interviews with McGuinn. Through these we learnt that the Byrds had 'plans to make a film later that year' - they would



The British debut at Nelson, after the 'dressing room drama'

write, score, direct and star themselves! It was, I fear, the usual American star bullshit - a lot of bragging, plus the usual tourist number; they didn't want to marvel at our red buses and our policemen's helmets, but 'we wanna buy mod clothes in Carnaby Street - then we'll be able to look even more English. And I want to meet John Lennon - he sounds like a man after my own heart. Who knows, maybe we'll come home with English accents.... crazy!' ¹⁷

Now, at their Savoy Hotel press conference (August 2nd), they talked about Bob Dylan.¹⁸ 'Dylan is really the best folk writer of our time', said McGuinn. 'His phrasing is unique; he is a product of the twentieth century (?) and is completely tuned to the present time'. The New Musical Express added: 'In actual fact, Dylan attended the group's recording of 'Mr Tambourine Man' and was completely satisfied with the result'. This, as we now know, was a patent falsehood.

McGuinn, it transpired, arrived at the airport weighted down with excess baggage: 'Jim McGuinn carries an air rifle and 35 lb of ammunition around with him. I couldn't kill anything! he states, 'it's just for target practice!'. (Oh yes?)



The Byrds on 'Ready Steady Go' during the August 1965 tour

out with that samba beat. We thought it would make a good single - it had everything; a good message, a good melody, and the beat was there. It fit right into the commercial formula of the time.

Q: Do you have any idea how far that song reached?

RM: Well, you told me it reached into the back hills, and the preachers there were into it. I heard that in Catholic schools the nuns were using it in classes.... but in South Africa they banned it because it came from the bible. They're so reactionary and straight-laced, and yet hypocritical, that they couldn't justify a religious song being done by a rock group, which is connected with sin and dope and sex and the whole schmeer of bad stuff. They said it was blasphemous for us to do it. We were on tour there later, and they didn't like us too much (see later). There are somewhat friendly feelings between the US and South Africa on an industrial/commercial level, but when you get to personal feelings, they resent America.... which most countries do, actually.

It's worth noting that the b-side of

Thirty minutes later he had recovered sufficiently to appear on stage'.¹⁹

It was not until they played the Finbury Park Astoria (which became the Rainbow Theatre for a few months in 1971/72) ten days later, however, that the press were there in force to criticise them. The other acts on the bill, including Donovan, Kenny Lynch and Them, were well received and drew vast applause, say the papers, but the Byrds 'were treated to a traditional slow hand-clap for taking 5 minutes to tune up'. Once onstage, their numbers were 'drowned by over amplification'.... 'inaudible'.... 'any communication with the audience, or any stage presence was non-existent', and 'as an answer to the Beatles, they were pretty pathetic'.²⁰ So there you go.

Though their act was undeniably very ragged and unpolished, in all fairness, I feel that the press was a bit over zealous in twisting the knife - most of the critics were simply unprepared to allow any challenge of the British domination of world pop music. What? These damned impertinent Yanks will be sending over a bloody cricket team next!

So, the Byrds ignominiously flew home with their tail feathers between their legs. It was a pretty miserable experience all in all, though a subsequent press release (from PR man Jay Bernstein in July 1968) announces that 'the invasion turned out to be a triumph'. How about that as an example of the American flair for exaggeration?

** ** ** ** *

Though a world-wide top tenner, the next single, 'All I really wanna do', was a comparative flop - and to add insult to injury, Cher's version outsold them. 'That really disappointed us.... in fact, what got to me most was Dylan coming up to me and saying 'they beat you, man! - and he lost faith in me. He was shattered.... his material had been bastardised; there were the defenders and protectors of his music, and we'd let Sonny & Cher get away with it'.²¹

Never mind; the third single, 'Turn Turn Turn', restored them to number one.... in USA, Britain, Europe, and the Orient too.

Q: Where did 'Turn Turn Turn' get started?

Roger McGuinn: It was after our first bus tour. Touring around the midwest.... day after day.... terrible. I was sitting in the back of the bus with my girl, and she asked me if I knew the song. I said yeah, because I'd arranged it for Judy Collins. It was a standard folk song by that time, but I played it and it came out rock and roll, because that's what I was programmed to do, like a computer. I couldn't do it as it had been done traditionally, and it came



The official Summer 1965 press photograph (Is that a wig on Crosby's head?)

you free this time! shows Dylan influencing their songwriting at last, whereas they'd written pure and simple pop songs previously - the structure is basically Dylan, but neaten to compact verses, and there is also a bit of obligatory harp playing (just to prove that it's authentic folk-rock!) 'Lay down your weary tune'.... great.... subsequently done in English folk style by McGuinness Flint in 1972. 'Satisfied Mind' (previously recorded by Pete Seeger and Hamilton Camp among many others) is one of the first free-head/carefree hip philosophy songs.... a 'bread's not where it's at, man' song. 'If you're gone' is a Donovan 'Catch the wind' rip-off. 'The Times they are a-changing' is a bit too contrived with its vocal echo and smart-aleck rock ending.... I suspect their motives in recording this. 'Oh Susannah' - another weird last track.... over 100 years old Christy Minstrel/Swanee Ribber/Vaudeville rock, complete with guitar re-verb at the end ('we've got all the gads, mate').

And so, by March 1966 (one year after the release of 'Mr Tambourine Man'),



THE BYRDS

like a fat tractor tyre. (Come on CBS, get this on an album before we send the boys round).

An album followed! 'Turn Turn Turn' (CBS 62652, released 6/12/65, produced by Terry Melcher). Notes: The title track is worth the 50 or so takes.... the vocal harmonies are so graceful and exact. 'Set



THE BYRDS

the single, 'She don't care about time', has never been included on an album, and has become one of the very rarest Byrd tracks. The structure and vocal are excellent, but particularly outstanding is the guitar solo, which is a rock-up of Bach's 'Jesu Joy of man's desiring', played over Hillman's bass, rolling around

the Byrds had had 4 hit singles (it won't be wrong! had been released in January in the States, and made the top 40), 2 top ten albums (whose sleeve notes you should read for a fuller picture), and the following appearances behind them:

Cirol's on Sunset Strip in Hollywood for one month, March/April 1965.

Rolling Stones tour; 7 one night stands during Spring 1965.

Jane and Henry Fondal's Independence Day Celebration party in Malibu, July.

Dance/concert tour; coast to coast. July.

Columbia Records Annual Convention in Miami, July.

British tour for three weeks in August.

The Trip club in Hollywood. Two weeks in September.

Dick Clark Caravan of Stars, coast to coast. One month; November.

Concerts in Hawaii, December.

The Trip in Hollywood. Two weeks in January 1966.

Concerts with the Dillards in Southern California; February.

Coast to coast tour as headliners. March.

"The Byrds came out of 1965 very well, their dignity unimpaired. They were the first hair emancipated American group to make it with integrity and international acceptance". 22

ZZ:²³ Did Paul McCartney really get worried about your possible stagnation and advise you to drop the little sunglasses and the 12 string sound?

Roger McGuinn: Yes.

ZZ: Did you heed his advice?

Roger: No. I literally dropped the specs on a motorbike - they blew off and I didn't bother to go back and look for them or to replace them. The 12 string I liked, so I didn't drop it... I was one of the few people playing it properly anyway, so I figured I'd stick with it.

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SUMMARY: 'Mr Tambourine Man'/'I knew I'd want you' tops the Billboard singles chart on June 26; 3 months after release. 'MR TAMBOURINE MAN' album released 21st June (in USA); 20/8/65 (UK). 'All I really want to do'/'I'll feel a whole lot better' released July - reaches top ten but lacks impetus of previous single. 'Turn Turn Turn'/'She don't care about time' tops US singles chart on December 4th and stays there for three weeks. 'TURN TURN TURN' album released on 6th Dec (USA); 22nd March 1966 (UK). 'It won't be wrong'/'Set you free this time' released January 1966 but becomes only a relatively small top 40 hit.

*** ** **



THE BYRDS of this era remain unchanged; the photo was taken at the Savoy Hotel press reception in August 1965. Left to right: Dave Crosby, resplendent in his green suede mini-cape, already shows signs of a double chin and thinning hair; Chris Hillman, with straightened hair, is taken to wearing tailored sports jackets; Jim McGuinn wears his celebrated trend-setting Ben Franklin style sun-specs (he adopted them around June); Gene Clark

looks as if he hasn't quite recovered from the flight over; and Michael Clarke seems to be under the influence of various beneficial herbs.

CONTEMPORARY EVENTS:

1965 April 5... Eric Clapton leaves Yardbirds to join John Mayall's band.
April 6... Early Bird launched.
April 12... Ken Kesey busted for possession of marijuana.

PREFLYTE (Together Records)
SIDE ONE: "You Shaved Me"
"Here Without You, Why?" "For Me"
"Way" "The Reason" "Why?" "For Me"
"Against" "Beatnik" "SIDE TWO"
"You Won't Be the Airport" "Sing"
"I'd Want You" "Mr. Tambourine Man"
PERSONNEL: Gene Clark, tam-
bourine; Mike Clarke, drums; David
Crosby, rhythm guitar; Chris Hill-
man, bass; Jim McGuinn, 12-string
guitar. PRODUCER: Jim Dickson.
FEMIX ENGINEER: Keith Olsen.

MR. TAMBOURINE MAN
(CS 9173 CL 2372)
SIDE ONE: "It's No Use" "The
Billie Jo" "Rhymer" "I'll Feel A
Way" "L. B. Brown" "You Won't Be
Way" "C" "Spanish Harlem Incident"
"We'll Meet Again" "SIDE TWO"
"Chimes of Freedom" "Don't Doubt
Yourself Baby" "Here Without
You" "Mr. Tambourine Man" "I
Knew I'd Want You" "All I Really
Want to Do"
PERSONNEL: Gene Clark, tam-
bourine; Mike Clarke, drums; David
Crosby, rhythm guitar; Chris Hill-
man, bass; Jim McGuinn, 12-string
guitar. PRODUCER: Terry Melcher.
ENGINEER: Ray Gerhardt.

TUEN TUEN TUEN
(CS 9254 CL 2454)
SIDE ONE: "Turn! Turn! Turn!"
"It Won't Be Wrong" "I Sat Down
Free This Time" "Lay Down Your
Weary Tune" "He Was a Friend of
Mine" "SIDE TWO: "The World
Turns All Around Her" "Satisfied
Mind" "If You're Gone" "The
Times They Are A-Changin'"
"Wait and See" "Oh! Susannah"
PERSONNEL: Gene Clark, tam-
bourine; Mike Clarke, drums; David
Crosby, rhythm guitar; Chris Hill-
man, bass; Jim McGuinn, 12-string
guitar. PRODUCER: Terry Melcher.
ENGINEER: Ray Gerhardt.

June 3... McDivitt and White make 4 day space flight in Gemini 4.
June 21... The Charlans first gig; Red Dog Saloon, Virginia City, Nev.
July 6... Jefferson Airplane form and play first gig at Matrix in SF.
July 14... Adlai Stevenson collapses and dies in Hanover Square, London.
July 20... "Do you believe in magic?" first Lovin Spoonful single, and "Like a rolling stone" by Dylan, released.
July 23... Wyman, Jagger and Jones each fined £5 for public urination.
Aug 11... Worst riots of the century start in Watts area of Los Angeles.
Aug 20... "Satisfaction" by the Roll - ing Stones released in England.
Aug 21... "I got you babe" by Sonny & Cher tops US singles chart, followed by Beatles' "Help" and "Eve of destruction" by Barry McGuire.
Aug 27... Dylan's "Highway 61" album released in USA.
Sept 5... Dr Albert Schweitzer dies.
Oct... Conception of San Francisco/ hippie/flower power scene.
Oct 6... Opening of Post Office tower.
Oct 8... President Johnson has gall bladder operation - goes on TV to show his scar to the waiting world.
Oct 16... Berkeley anti-war rally with Kesey and his Merry Pranksters and the Instant Action Jug Band (to become Country Joe and the Fish).
Nov 8... Death penalty abolished in the United Kingdom.
Nov 9... Unprecedented power cuts and black out in New York City.
Nov 11... Rhodesian government declares UDI.
Dec 4... "Rubber Soul" Beatles album released.
Dec 15... Gemini 6 and 7 link in orbit.
Jan 1... Simon & Garfunkel's "Sounds of silence", an old track Byrdified by CBS, tops US singles chart.
Jan 3... Acid Test held at Fillmore.
Jan 17... American B52 carrying 4 atom bombs crashes off coast of Spain.
Jan 21... Trips Festival at Longshore Hall in San Francisco.
Feb 14... Sinyavsky and Daniel both sentenced to hard labour for publishing alleged anti-Soviet work abroad.
Mar 3... Buffalo Springfield formed.
Mar 8... IRA blow up Nelson monument in Dublin.
Mar 12... Lovel's first album released.
Mar 31... Labour wins UK election and stays in power for second term.

Byrds
Jim McGuinn
Gene Clark
Dave Crosby
Mike Clarke
Chris Hillman



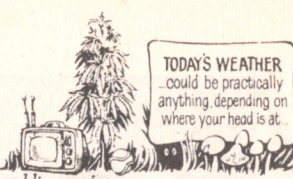
VOLUME 1 - NUMBER 28

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HOME EDITION

ZIGZAG WANDERINGS



What happened to the January issue? good question. I think that Christmas and the New year must bear the blame for its non-appearance (they provide a suitable excuse, anyway)... that, and the fact that I spent a week in America, during which time the multi-million pound Zigzag corporation went to pot.

On returning to the Old Sod (England that is), I wrote a fairly detailed account of the visit (which was primarily to witness the New York debut of Genesis) but my colleagues here thought that only a very minuscule percentage of readers would be at all interested in my observations, biased opinion and irrelevant chit-chat. So, what we propose to do is to publish it separately, wrapped up in a lengthy Genesis interview - but don't send in for it yet; if it gets off the ground, the details will be in the next issue.

Which reminds me; a lot of people are still writing in for "Snoopy in Love", T-shirts and poll results. Supplies of these, I fear, ran out some time ago.... but, as you'll see in the back issues ad, a few bundles of issues 2 and 5 have come to light.

Due to the distribution of the magazine fanning out to a few new outlets, we're getting letters from people who've never seen Zigzag before. "It's OK", they say "but you seem to be ignoring the best English bands - like Uriah Heep and Black Sabbath, and how about something on Nazareth?" And others say we should be more diverse and less confined to personal feelings. Well, the point is this; we're not out to cram our opinions and views down anyone's throats.... we just write for what we feel is "the Zigzag family". To join this "family", you simply enshroud yourself in the spirit of the mag, which is produced for our friends rather than as a commercial enterprise; if you like it - great.... but if you want to read about bands that are apparently non-Zigzag types, there are plenty of other papers around, OK?

On the subject of letters, would the following readers who omitted their addresses please drop us a line; someone who sent us a subscription addressed to "Darling Skwig Skwag" (?), Alan Jones - who saw the Kinks at Oxford, and R. L. Jacobson, whose bank is in the Strand.

Also on the subject of letters - to those friends I owe letters to - I'm sorry for the delay.... especially Chrissie and Barry, who must think me unpardonably rude. You know what I'm like - I still haven't finished repairing the coal shed roof which I started two years ago.

On to something of a less irrelevant nature - records. Great recent stuff from Fairport Convention (who saved us from extinction in 1969).... their 'History of' double is super fine, Captain Beefheart (but there can be no excuse for that diabolically tatty sleeve), Loudon Wainwright III (for my money infinitely more interesting than John Prine. By the way, what's all this fuss about Bette Midler? Everyone who's taste I respect says she's the greatest thing since the wheel.... I just can't see it; she's sensibly chosen songs which are so good that it would take more than her mediocre voice to take away their charm. This year's Tiny Tim.... Carl Wayne with boobs), and 'Nuggets'

(28 'artyfacts from the first psychedelic era', great stuff for Zigzaggers, compiled by Lenny Kaye, who I thanked personally on behalf of you all); interesting recent stuff from Roy Buchanan (did you see him on the Whistle Test? Phenomenal!) Man (with excellent inside sleeve), Crazy Horse (much better than last time, but not exceptional), The Section (nothing forceful.... just tasteful quiet stuff, ideal for use as background music when laying out magazine artwork), Ry Cooder (exploring an area of traditional American music untouched by most other folk-rockers), Roy Orbison (if you're a nostalgic rock twit amused by his screeching climaxes), Ian A. Anderson (sleeping blissfully as the flames singe his whiskers), Duane Allman (though the best tracks off this anthology are 'Loan me a dime' by Boz Scaggs and 'Layla' by Eric Clapton), Eric Andersen (a Dylan contemporary who somehow missed the gravy train), Commander Cody (just cancelled an English tour - the fool) and a good series of Specialty Records, featuring Sam Cooke, Frankie Lee Sims, Don and Dewey and Little Richard.

Fascinating book you may be interested in; Rock File edited by Charlie Gillett (NEL paperback at 40p). Stuffed with very worthwhile information if you're a fact fetishist. Also, have a gander at 'Let

it Rock', a genuine monthly magazine with a fresh approach and a nice atmosphere.

Most interesting bands I've seen recently; Bees Make Honey (stars by the end of the year), Shoot (Jim McCartney's new band - keep your fingers crossed for them) and the ebullient Brinsleys, looking for all the world like convicts out on day release. Nick Lowe explained his own bristling beard; he asked for a fairly short haircut, whereupon the Italian barber attacked with great gusto; "oh, I make ze leetle mistake.... never mind, I just cut a little more off zis side" This charade continued until the hapless bassplayer looked like a coconut shy.

If you have any English pop or rock singles or eps (63-71) of the Move, Kinks, Zombies, Who, Yardbirds, Grapefruit, Stones, Herd, Pretty Things, the Small Faces, T Rex or just about any artist, popular or obscure, new or used, or any pop papers dated 62-72 for sale, drop a line to Alan Betrock, 37-06 89th Street, Jackson Heights, NY 11372, USA. He'll buy them or trade US albums. Please write to him - he's a good guy.... gave me a guided tour of all the sights of New York (it's all in that Genesis special - coming soon!)

It happens every time; the Wanderings column always gets left til the very last minute and I'm left staring out the window at the night, wondering what the devil I can fill the rest of this column up with. 2.15 in the morning, Nixon's just been on the television announcing that the Vietnam war was a mistake after all, the music of Clifton Chenier is careering out of the speakers at full volume, and my inspiration, never more than tepid at the best of times, seems to have frozen over completely. Obviously time to go down and make some coffee.


Ah yes.... does anyone out there know anything about West Coast group Kaleidoscope - any articles or interviews. If so, I'd be grovellingly grateful if I could perhaps borrow them for a while.

And now, for no other reason than to fill up a bit of space, a few words about Michael Hurley, whose records never seem to get released over here (very sad):

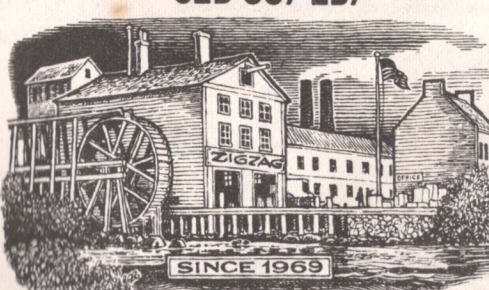
Michael Hurley measures his life by cars and nicknames and events which most people ignore and forget. a saga which stretches all the way back to an elderly 1938 Plymouth, in Pennsylvania, people with names the likes of Munchin' Roast, the Weebs. Big Meats. Rubs the Card and Memphis Jelly, and the loss and miraculous retrieval of a pen knife in 1948.

We propose to start a couple of new series; Great Groups of the Sixties, and Great American Unknowns, so send in your requests. The mere mention of the Misunderstood last month (sorry, last issue) caused an unprecedented flood of enthusiasm - so we'll have a crack at them if we can assemble all the bits and pieces.... I suppose they could qualify for inclusion in both the above categories, come to think of it.

Keep rocking - and keep listening to John Peel's programmes.... where else could you hear 'Clap your Hands' by the Beaumarks, or dissertations on Annette Funicello's mammaries. Amazing stuff. Pete.



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